

*THE CORBICULA CYCLE :
POSTMODERNISM AND IDENTITY IN
ON THE EDGE, THROUGH THE NIGHT
AND IN THE SHADE*

DAVID LEDDY

Three DVDs, three playtexts and a thesis
submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
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Abstract

This practice-based research is based around the creation of a triptych of performances entitled *The Corbicula Cycle*. The three performance pieces are: *On The Edge*, *Through The Night* and *In The Shade*. The aim of the practice is to take the supposedly 'low' artistic forms of the murder-mystery, Cinderella narrative, blackface minstrelsy and drag cabaret and interpenetrate them with theoretical content from postmodernism and identity politics whilst combining formal elements of dramatic writing and performance art practice. The emphasis of both the research and the research outcomes is a practical one. The DVDs and playscripts represent the core of the submission, with this thesis serving to support and contextualise the practice. Thus the contribution of this work is demonstrated not through new *theoretical* findings but through new *artistic* findings in the three performances.

In terms of postmodernism, the research focuses on intertextuality; deconstruction; simulacra and simulation; split and shifting subjectivity; parody, pastiche, irony and the mixing of the genres. In relation to identity politics, the piece takes a postmodern view, covering cultural theories relating to gender, sexuality, class and race. The overarching objective in combining these different knowledge paradigms is to create a series of open, polysemantic texts which can be read in different ways by different viewers. Thus, it is hoped that the pieces can be shown successfully outside of an academic context and be open to readers other than an 'expert-spectator' audience of academics and artists.

None of these artistic or theoretical constructions is innovative in itself. However, this research represents a modest contribution to knowledge through the subtly new ways it combines the paradigms of cultural theory, dramatic new writing and performance art with the generic artistic models of the murder-mystery, the Cinderella narrative, drag cabaret and blackface minstrelsy. It also provides substantial new insights through critical reflection upon process and products, exploring the play between artistic aims, principles of composition and audience response.

Acknowledgements

This research is practice-based and the majority of work was the creation of three solo performances written and performed by myself. I was the principal artist in this work and responsible for the vast majority of artistic decisions and work. However, the performances did involve elements of collaboration with directors, designers and musicians and thus I would like to acknowledge and thank director Kate Nelson, composer Pippa Murphy, director Susan Worsfold, and designers Lisa Cochrane and Lucinda Meredith. More detail is given in the introduction of this thesis as to the individual contribution of these practitioners.

Thanks are due to my supervisory team at Queen Margaret University College: Prof. Maggie Kinloch and Dr. Lizzie Eldridge.

Keywords for cataloguing

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Theatre | Live art | Gender | Intertextuality |
| Postmodernism | Performance art | Sexuality | Deconstruction |
| Identity | New writing | Race | Simulacra |
| | | Class | Performativity |
| PaR | | | Subjectivity |
| [practice as research] | | | Camp |
| | | | Drag |
| | | | Blackface |
| PARIP | | | Parody |
| [practice as research in performance] | | | Irony |
| Practice-based | | | |

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Introduction

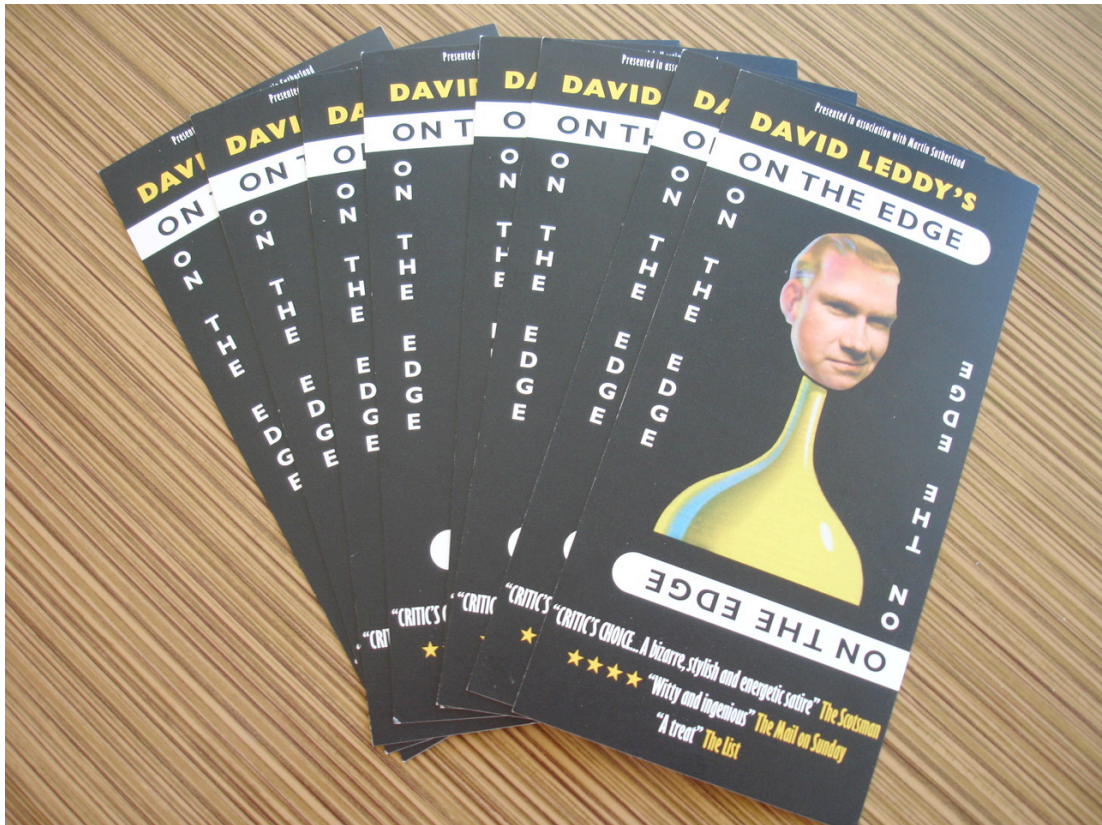
This project focuses on the creation of three theatre pieces: *On The Edge*, *Through The Night* and *In The Shade*. The research drew heavily on particular aspects of cultural theory, specifically writings around postmodernism and identity politics. These were combined with formal elements from performance art as well as narrative-based dramatic writing. These elements of supposedly 'high' culture were all played out within the 'low' artistic forms of the murder-mystery, Cinderella narratives, blackface minstrelsy and drag cabaret. Although none of these elements are new in themselves, the research aimed to find subtly new ways of combining them. Thus the principle question that the research addresses is a processual one of *how* one might create performance that combines postmodern theory, identity politics, narrative drama and formal elements of performance art with the murder-mystery, the Cinderella myth, blackface minstrelsy or drag cabaret.

The three theatre pieces are intended to work as a triptych (rather than a trilogy) because they address similar theatrical and intellectual issues but remain mostly separate in narrative and theatrical form. However, they are intended to make various self-reflexive references to each other on a number of levels so as to link the pieces together as a set, hence their collective title *The Corbicula Cycle*.

On The Edge

On The Edge is a deconstruction of the politics of 'otherness' in the clichés of the country house murder-mystery. Focusing particularly on sexual politics, the piece also draws heavily on Baudrillard's simulacra and simulation as well as postmodern notions of subjectivity and intertextual reflexivity. The performance draws idiosyncratic historical reference through murder narratives beginning with Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and moving on through the work of Victorian criminologists. This is later linked in to the 'country-

house' murder tradition typified by Agatha Christie and on to Hollywood film's obsession with the 'psychotic homosexual'. Structurally, it draws heavily on Béla Bartók's 1911 opera *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* as well as making use of the art-deco portraiture of Tamara De Lempicka.



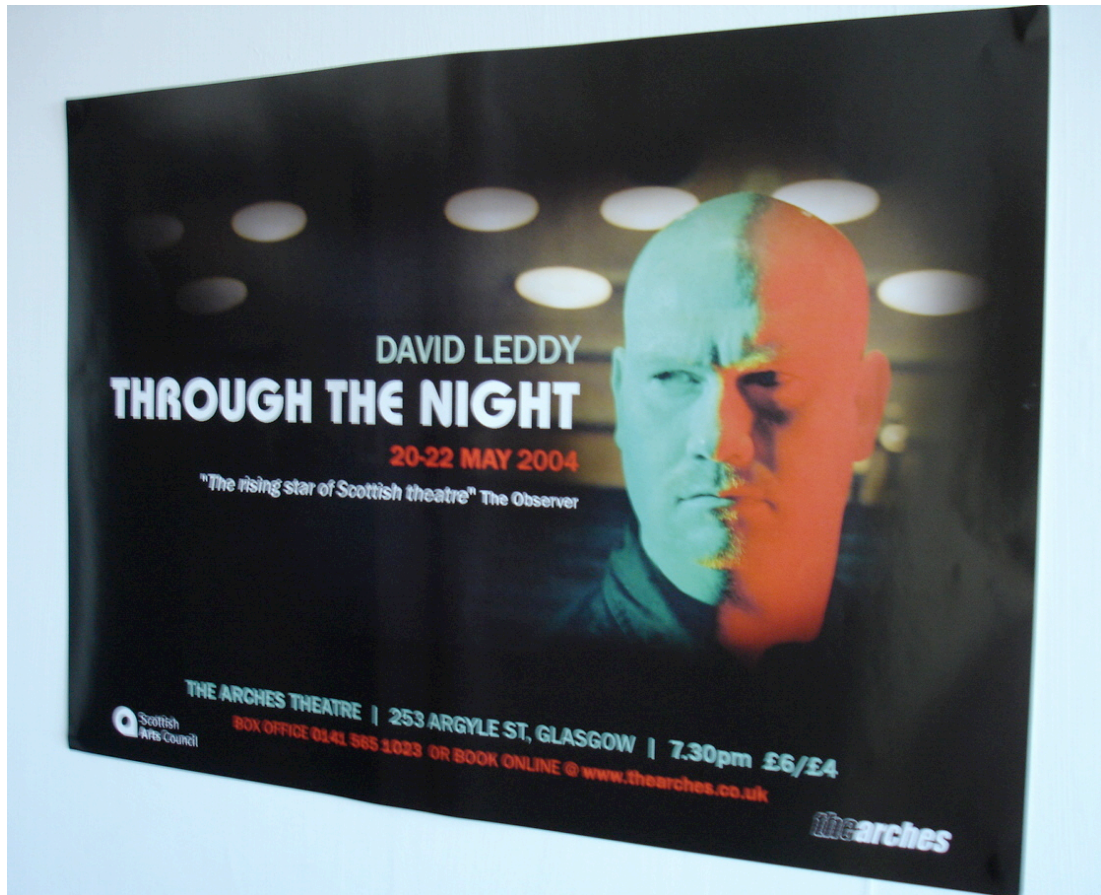
1 – *On The Edge* marketing materials

This production was originally performed at The Arches, Glasgow, in November 2001 and again in March 2002, followed by a run at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August 2002. The DVD and script submitted here are of the final version presented at the Edinburgh Fringe festival.

Through The Night

Focusing more on class politics, this production looks at Cinderella / rags-to-riches myths and how they relate to the politics of social status. The conflict between 'high' and 'low' artistic forms is given particular attention, focusing

on the perceived cultural 'values' of classical and pop music. The piece also draws heavily on Buddhist philosophy and imagery.



2 – *Through The Night* poster

Through The Night was first performed at The Arches in Glasgow in May 2004 and then again at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in August 2005. It is the Edinburgh Fringe version which is submitted here as script and DVD.

In The Shade

This piece is a drag blackface musical revue that looks at the ethics of cultural appropriation. Particular focus is given to black American popular music and the ways it can be appropriated by white performers. Postmodern intertextuality features heavily in the piece. It references three films beloved of drag queens: *Sunset Boulevard* (Wilder, 1950), *All About Eve* (Mankiewicz, 1950) and *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane* (Aldrich, 1962).

Narrative and textual elements from these films are woven together with biographical events from the lives of famous black singers. The piece draws on a wide range of scholarly texts but gives specific attention to the writings of bell hooks and E. Patrick Johnson. Judith Butler's writings on drag and performativity were of particular relevance here, as was Moe Meyer's conceptualisation of camp as a radical culture critique. The piece was performed at The Tron theatre, Glasgow, in May 2005.



3 – *In The Shade* poster campaign on Glasgow subway

It is important to note that the research did not aim to give an overview of *all* aspects of cultural theory but, rather, focuses in on particular theories and/or the work of particular academics. Specifically, Derrida's theories of deconstruction were applied to all three of the 'low' artistic forms. Identity politics was used in the form of Judith Butler's theories on gender construction and Moe Meyer's radicalised conception of camp and queer theory. Issues of class were explored through the relationship between 'high' and 'low' cultural forms (as discussed by Bourdieu, for example). Cultural theoretical discussions of race involved a wide range of scholars but E. Patrick Johnson's questioning of black 'authenticity' as well as his critique of black male homophobia were central to my research as was bell hooks' use of the term 'race' over that of 'ethnicity'. This was followed by the use of postmodern practices such as a heavy use of intertextual reference, Baudrillard's notion of simulacra and simulation, mixing of genres, and an approach to subjectivity that questions the 'real' and privileges the mimetic. Importantly, a liberal use of parody, pastiche and irony can be seen in all three productions.

I came to realise early in my project that it would be necessary to keep a strict control on the balance between cultural theory and artistic practice. Academically, one is tempted (not to mention sometimes encouraged) to explore theoretical issues in more and more depth and then allow practice-based elements to become a simplistic reflection and translation of academic reading. I was clear that my intention here was not to do research which simply contained artistic practice but which was firmly *based* in artistic practice. In this sense, my decision was to privilege my practice-based work over my paper-based work.

The aim of the research was to apply a range of cultural theoretical concepts to my creative practice rather than focus on one specific theoretical concern. The imperative in using a range of different theories is that one cannot take an extremely detailed view of each of the theories. The research has taken a

necessarily pragmatic view in that sense and used broad brushstrokes and a degree of generalisation in order to create work which could be shown in mainstream public venues, away from the academy. Indeed, the goal here was not to create performance work which explores this cultural theory in-depth for an expert-spectator audience of academics. Nor was the aim to 'explain' this theory to a non-academic audience. Rather, it was to use cultural theory in order to create subtly new artistic forms which imbue 'low' artistic frameworks with a 'high' intellectual content. Similarly, the research was rooted in performance practice and thus did not aim for an equal weighting between the cultural-theoretical and the theatrical but rather to create performance work which *draws on* this theoretical body of knowledge in order to create multi-faceted performance texts which may be read in different ways by different people.

I chose to focus specifically on cultural theory that could be applied to performance and avoided work which I did not feel could translate well into art. For example, I felt that heavily abstract, linguistic theory that draws on semiotics would be artistically unsuitable for narrative pieces such as these. However, I would stress that the theories used here are not an exhaustive list of cultural theories that could be applied to performance and nor do I claim them to be. The choices of which theories were used and which theories were not was an area where I exercised more artistic judgement than academic deduction.

The key aim of this research is the creation of new works of art, but none of the particular elements of the project are new in themselves. However, as Robin Nelson (2005) suggests, 'one way in which creative practice becomes innovative is by being informed by theoretical perspectives, either new in themselves, or perhaps newly explored in a given medium.' (2). Performance art and cultural theory have long been combined in both creation and analysis. One only need look at companies such as Goat Island, The Wooster Group and Forced Entertainment for examples of that. It is far less

common for cultural theory to be combined with *dramatic* theatrical writing, particularly with regard to postmodernism. In English language contemporary drama, we can see a certain degree of postmodern influence in works by writers such as David Greig in *San Diego* (2003) and *Pyrenees* (2005), but this is certainly the exception to the rule. It is more common to find such influence in German language drama such as Rainald Goetz's *Jeff Koons* (1998) and Roland Schimmelpfennig's *Arabian Night* (2002).

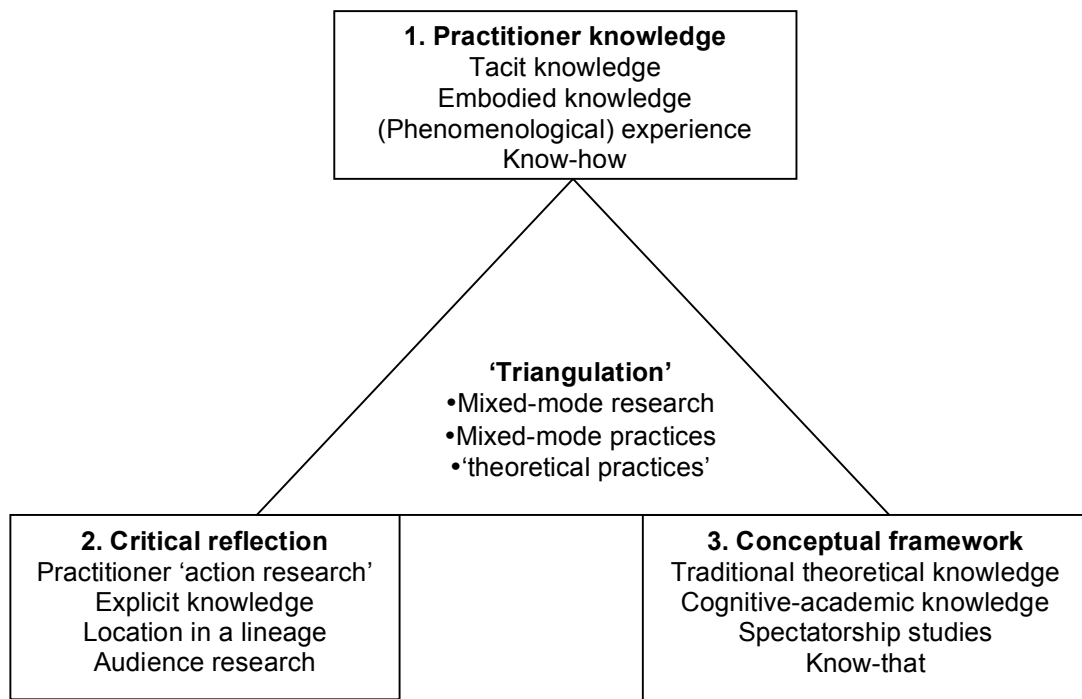
At the same time, it has become commonplace for performance artists to produce work which draws heavily on 'low' art forms such as burlesque and circus. Examples include artists such as Annie Sprinkle, with her infamous show *Post-Porn Modernist* (1989), and, more recently, Ursula Martinez's *Show-Off* (2000) and *OAP* (2003) as well as work produced through the Duckie collective in London such as *C'est Vauxhall* (2003). Specifically, I am not aware of any PaR research or professional performance work which aims to combine dramatic writing and elements of performance art with postmodernism and identity politics within the structures of the specific 'low' forms used here: the murder-mystery, the Cinderella narrative in both realist and magic realist form, drag cabaret and blackface minstrelsy. Thus, I have aimed to create performance pieces which combine these different elements and would assert that this constitutes a modest contribution to artistic knowledge. It is also important to note that my aim has been to contribute to new *artistic* knowledge, rather than new *cultural theoretical* knowledge. Thus, as I shall explore in more depth later, the relationship with cultural theory in this research has been to use it as a tool with which to create performance, not vice versa.

As a model for the balance between paper-based theory and arts-based practice, I would cite Robin Nelson's 2005 paper 'Articulating Media Practice as Research.' He suggests that arts-based research does not sit well with the rational, scientific knowledge paradigm of research dominant in 'the academy'. He submits that 'the model implies an objectifying theory of

knowledge when another epistemological tradition (from Bergson through to Deleuze and Guatarri) has emphasised the processual, relational, experiential nature of knowledge.’(1) Thus he suggests that practice-based research needs to articulate itself in different ways:

It seems to me, for example, that the evidence of insider practitioner ‘embodied’ knowledge, perhaps too insubstantial to stand alone, can be helpfully correlated with other perhaps insubstantial evidence - maybe qualitative accounts of reader response – collectively to produce a body of knowledge. One dimension lends conviction to the others. Further, there is a kind of processual inter-relationship between the dimensions. (Nelson 2005, 1)

His model recommends a ‘triangulation’ of data-sets. However, where social scientists might use this term to denote ‘hard’ knowledge which might be used for ‘proof’, Nelson makes clear that his intention is to borrow from them ‘the idea of cross-referring different sources of data in a multi-vocal approach to a dialogic process.’ (2). He offers the following model:



He is clear to point out that although in the third corner of the triangle the knowledge becomes overtly ‘cognitive-academic’, he sees ‘each corner of the triangle and each stage of the process of making and of research as potentially knowledge-producing,’ going on to state that ‘the knowledge

produced is not a hard, factual, content-based knowledge but a relational, processual knowledge. The latter can only be fully articulated by bringing out an inter-related process dynamic between the angles.’ (3). Through the main body of this thesis, I will aim to offer a balance of my ‘cognitive academic’ knowledge in the form of the cultural theory which I used as a tool to apply to my ‘practitioner knowledge’ as an artist. Discussion of public reactions to the work is then given in the conclusion to the thesis.

The balance between embodied practitioner knowledge or artistic ‘instinct’ and cognitive knowledge is a difficult one to maintain. As an artist, one is often drawn to ambiguity. Art that communicates its ideas clearly and succinctly is often accused of being simplistic or didactic. On the other hand, as an academic, one is encouraged to present one’s ideas with as much lucidity and precision as possible. There is often a contradiction here when it comes to actually describing aspects of the research process or in drawing conclusions from it. The issue is further confused by the positioning of the research within a poststructuralist tradition where to ‘prove’ any idea as being ‘true’ is an almost meaningless process. This research has actively embraced notions from poststructuralism such as readerly and writerly texts and Barthes’ ‘death of the author’ (1977). It should be noted, though, that these theories are contextual ones which overarch the research on a metastructural level. They are not a practical ‘toolkit’ theory used to create performance.

However much one intends to create open, ambiguous texts, it would be naïve to imagine that they exist without a directed reading position or positions. Thus, on a practical level, one will often find artists (myself included) discussing what the work ‘means’ and what the audience ‘will think.’ I am fully aware that individuals may not follow the directions my text gives them, or may choose to ‘read against the grain’ of the text. Much of the main body of this thesis, then, focuses on the ways in which I have used cultural theory as a tool in the directed reading position/s of the texts. In the

conclusion, I offer some reflection on the ways in which audiences, critics and funders followed (or did not follow) that directed reading position. Particularly, I focus on the notion that whilst it may be possible to create performances that combine cultural theory with populist performance forms, audiences may not be aware of this process.

Throughout this thesis, I will return to the terms performance art (or live art) and dramatic writing (or 'new' writing). I acknowledge immediately that these are open and ambiguous terms that cannot be easily or firmly defined. Interestingly, the terms themselves are often arranged into binaries where live art is conceived as the binary opposite of drama. In reality, of course, the differences between these areas is continuum rather than a binary. One of the central tenets of this research is to question and disturb the notions of 'high' and 'low' cultural forms as well as creating work which moves fluidly back and forth along a sliding scale between dramatic 'new' writing and live art. However, for the sake of clarity, I will offer a brief definition of the terms as I use them and offer some artists who I would regard as fitting well within the terms themselves.

For the purposes of this research, I would define dramatic 'new' writing as being work which mostly remains within the confines of Eugene Scribe's 'well-made play', following from Aristotle's *Poetics*. Narrative is central to the work as is a psychological approach to notions of 'character'. In performance style, dramatic 'new' writing values realism as typified by Stanislavski's system. In the UK, this work is exemplified in venues and companies such as the Traverse theatre, Royal Court and Paines' Plough. The writer is always considered to be the primary artist in the creative process. I would offer Patrick Marber's *Closer* (1997), Gregory Burke's *Gagarin Way* (2001) or even Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking* (1996).

The terms 'performance art', 'live art' and 'contemporary performance' are less easily defined. Whilst this work is often delineated by terms such as

'boundary breaking', my professional experience has taught me that there are a clear and strict set of rules about what constitutes this type of work. It is almost never based on notions of narrative or psychological character. Where narrative is present in the work, it is almost always an autobiographical or 'confessional' text taken from the artist's own life in which they perform themselves. It is often performed by solo artists, though not always, and it is almost a prerequisite that the work be 'transgressive' of social or at least theatrical norms. Often this notion of transgression is centred around the body and identity. I would submit that this work is typified by the programme at the yearly *National Review of Live Art*. As examples of practising artists I would offer people such as Annie Sprinkle, Karen Finley and Franko B.

In terms of academic, PaR research, I found it difficult to identify other researchers who were focusing on similar areas. At this time, formalised PaR PhD research in theatre and performance is a relatively new field and thus there is not a wide range of work to draw on. At the same time, this work is not as easily disseminated as traditional, paper-based research. However, I would argue that there is some similarity between my research and that of Yuji Sone, in her examination of cultural otherness (2002), though we seem to approach this issue in entirely different ways in our actual practice.

My own performance pieces were all initially written as scripts and were never 'devised' in a rehearsal room. They were written by me and then read by others, who offered feedback for changes. Edits and changes were then made throughout the rehearsal process. It should also be noted that *On The Edge* and *Through The Night* were changed in between each of their public outings and that the DVDs and scripts presented here are the most recent versions. Lack of space in this thesis dictates that very little emphasis can be given to describing the contents of previous drafts, or the reasons for changes made and thus my focus here is on the submitted versions of the three shows.

Whilst I was the writer and performer of the three shows, these works did also involve collaboration with other artists. Director Susan Worsfold came in to rehearsals for *On The Edge* towards the end of the process and mostly gave advice on performance choices, without working on the text at all. Designer Lucinda Meredith designed the set for the piece. On *Through The Night* and *In The Shade*, I worked with Director/Dramaturge Kate Nelson. Whilst her contribution to the projects was large, it was also contained. Her dramaturgical involvement focused on editing, rather than conceptual suggestions. Whilst she sometimes made structural suggestions, such as changing the order of scenes, she never wrote text, invented characters or devised plotlines. I chose the overall theatrical style of all of the pieces and Nelson saw it as her role to assist the realisation of my ideas rather than to collaborate as an equal partner in the creative process.

I worked with costume designer Lisa Cochrane on both *Through The Night* and *In The Shade*, where she fleshed out initial design concepts provided by me. Composer and arranger Pippa Murphy contributed to both *Through The Night* and *In The Shade*. Her role in *Through The Night* was purely practical and involved working as a sound engineer on the piece. On the other hand, her role in *In The Shade* was highly creative. Having chosen the songs, I asked for avant-garde *musique concrete* arrangements which used samples from the original songs as well as everyday sounds. The rest of the work was entirely Pippa's and I make no claim to artistic authorship of those arrangements. The contribution of artistic collaborators is always a difficult issue in consideration of practice-based research. Thus, in the main body of this thesis I have taken the decision to only discuss artistic work that was wholly or primarily created by me.

It is strongly suggested that the reader should watch the three DVDs after reading this introduction and before reading the main body of this thesis as they represent the core of the submission. The main body of this thesis concentrates on cultural theory and the ways in which it was used as a practical tool to create the performances. This section is divided into two

main areas: *postmodernism* and *identity*. I feel troubled by the oversimplification of dividing the work into these two areas. Postmodernism, particularly, is such a contested term and one could certainly argue that some of the theories that I have included there should not have been placed under this umbrella. I would submit that it is inevitable that research as wide-ranging as this will inevitably suffer when one tries to divide it into simple and discrete chapters. However, for the sake of communicating my ideas clearly I believe that more is gained from the use of these two umbrella terms than is lost.

The main body of the thesis is then followed by a conclusion in two parts. In the first part I give an account of public reactions to the shows in order to contextualise the work for the reader and in order to draw my own conclusions about those reactions. As the focus of this PhD is on the creation of artistic work, this account relies on a succinct, subjective description of reactions rather than an in-depth discussion and analysis of audience reception. In the second part I offer conclusion to the project as a whole. The appendices contain footnoted scripts for all three shows. These footnotes are particularly important in detailing the very large number of intertextual references and quotations contained within the piece because there is not space to itemise them all in a short thesis such as this. It should be noted from the outset that, in my explanation of the cultural theory used, I do not have space to offer detailed discussion of particular intricacies of the theories used. I aim to give a succinct overview of the theories and the artistic ways in which they were used as tools, supporting it with examples from the shows.

A note on footnotes

I use a Harvard referencing system here and only use footnotes when adding references to quotations from the scripts for the shows or where quoting other writers who have used footnotes themselves.

DVD 1

THE CORBICULA CYCLE:
ON THE EDGE

DVD 2

THE CORBICULA CYCLE:
THROUGH THE NIGHT

DVD 3

THE CORBICULA CYCLE:
IN THE SHADE

PART ONE :

POSTMODERNISM

'To see but not be seen, to think but not to know.
Mystery. Anonymity. Ambiguity.'

(Gore Vidal, as cited by Madonna, 1994)

The cultural theory used in this research broadly falls into two categories of *postmodernism* and *identity*. I will argue later that the theories of identity I use mostly fall under the umbrella of postmodernism too. For the sake of clarity, though, I have divided the main body of this thesis into these two major sections.

To begin the section on postmodernism, then, I should offer a definition of the postmodern. I follow Chris Barker's submission (2000) that writings on postmodernism can loosely be divided into two strands. One is epistemological in its concerns, focusing on questions of truth and knowledge. Here he includes notions such as an anti-essentialist rejection of 'truth' as a fixed, eternal object as well as incredulity towards metanarratives and a view of knowledge as perspectival and heterogenous (21). The second strand is centred on cultural changes in contemporary life:

A sense of the fragmentary, ambiguous and uncertain quality of the world marked by high levels of reflexivity is said to be characteristic of postmodern culture. This goes hand in hand with a stress on contingency, irony and the blurring of cultural boundaries. Texts are typified by self-consciousness, bricolage and intertextuality. For some thinkers, postmodern culture heralds the collapse of the modern distinction between the real and simulations.

(Barker, 2000, 22)

There is no clear consensus about what falls neatly within the realms of the postmodern and what does not. Postmodernism has been allied with scholars as varied as Baudrillard, Foucault, Rorty, Lyotard, and Bauman, not all of whom would welcome that definition of their work. Similarly, poststructuralism and postmodernism share a certain rejection of 'universal' truths and metanarratives but are often erroneously attached to one another as two sides of the same theory. Jameson (1984) discusses postmodern culture as being characterised by the cannibalisation of styles from the past and present, by the loss of authentic artistic style in favour of pastiche, and by the breakdown of firm distinctions between high and low culture. Habermas (1987, 1989) has asserted that the modern has not yet passed

whilst Giddens (1990) has argued that many of the elements considered to be postmodern were already present in the modern.

Whilst I am aware of the subtle theoretical gradations of different definitions of postmodernism, I did not feel that on a practical, artistic level it would be useful to spend great lengths of time deliberating over these. This would be a blind alley that could greatly reduce the time available for making performance. Some of my research does touch on Barker's first strand of epistemological postmodernism. However, the majority of it focuses on the second strand, using postmodern stylistic devices to create performance. I do not claim that my research offers an exhaustive definition of postmodern theory; indeed, I do not believe this is possible. I chose the theories that would be most useful as tools for creating performance and avoided theories that I felt were too abstract to translate on to the stage. For example, much of the epistemological postmodernism is not used here, other than as overarching metatheoretical assumptions than come attached to postmodern stylistic devices.

I needed to arrive at my own definition of the postmodern that could be used as a *practical, creative* tool. In pragmatic terms, I reduced everything to a list of bullet points that I could return to when writing, editing and rehearsing...

- Parody, pastiche, irony
- Intertextuality
- Mix of Genres
- Self-reflexivity
- Split, shifting subjectivity. Subject position rather than 'characters'
- Question the 'real', privilege the mimetic

This was not intended to represent an exhaustive definition of postmodern traits but rather a list that could be applied to the shows that I planned to make. For example, non-linear and non-narrative work should certainly be included on a more comprehensive list of the postmodern. However, I had

chosen to combine the postmodern with more traditional, dramatic structure. Thus, whilst my narratives contain mildly anti-linear elements in terms of plot chronology, they do not draw heavily on non-linear and non-narrative postmodern traits. Reducing anything to a list of bullet points always necessitates simplification and one could argue that the important subtleties of different scholars' work have been lost. However, my project is a wide-ranging and practical one where theories on the postmodern were only one part of the work. I needed to make sure that one element of the work did not overpower the others. Thus, reducing a large body of theories to a bulleted list was necessary in order to move forward in developing creative work.

Intertextual reference was certainly the device most heavily employed in the three performances as well as parody, pastiche and irony. The three pieces also use a deliberate mixing of different genres. There is an element of postmodern subjectivity, where traditional notions of the psychologically motivated character are disturbed and questioned. I will now move on to discuss postmodernism in five sections addressing specific theoretical areas that I used as tools for the making of performance:

1. Intertextuality
2. Postmodern subjectivity
3. Parody, pastiche, irony and mixing of genres
4. Deconstruction
5. Simulacra and simulation

Intertextuality

The term 'intertextualité' was first coined by Julia Kristeva in her 1967 analysis of Bakhtin (Kristeva, 1984; as cited in Schostak 2005). Others such as Counsell and Wolf (2001: 12) argue that Barthes had already anticipated the principle of intertextuality in *Mythologies* (1957). The essential task for me, though, was to find a pithy definition of intertextuality to use as a tool for making performance. In *Cultural Studies: theory and practice*, Chris Barker gives the following useful summary of intertextuality as the citation of one text within another:

This involves allusion to particular texts and oblique references to other genre conventions and styles [...] This intertextuality is an aspect of enlarged cultural self-consciousness about the history and functions of cultural products. (Barker, 2000: 154)

I was also very interested in the notion discussed by Schostak that the web between these different intertextual references is non-hierarchical. No 'master signifier' is able to dominate the others. Rather, 'As a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds, it has no beginning. Reversible and accessible through several entrances, none surpassing the other' (2005). In relation to deconstruction (as I shall discuss later), I was particularly interested in the ways in which my intertextual referencing could bring into question the underlying assumptions of the text or genre I would be citing. In Muller's words, I was keen to 'create forces of tension and conflict between the "source" and the new' (as cited by Schostak 2005).

I would concur with Kristeva when she asserts that intertextuality is distinct from notions of 'influence.' I would argue that the traditional notion of influence is one where I might take ideas from another source and aim to work them into my artwork without them being overtly recognised by the viewer. Kristeva asserts that intertextuality, however, requires the 'transposition of one (or several) sign system[s] into another' (1984: 59-60).

In my mission to make open texts that would work on different levels for different viewers, I wanted to create a web of intertextual references that could be understood in different ways, depending on whether or not the viewer recognised a particular quotation or allusion. I was keen that the pieces would not rely too heavily on 'in-jokes' where one could only understand the work as a whole if one could 'get' the various references. For this reason, I cast my net wide in my references and tried to make allusions to both high and low culture, to individual texts as well as wider genres, to academic theory and to more popular ideas.

I will now go on to discuss in more detail some specific intertextual references in each of the three performances.

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When I began working on *On The Edge*, I was keen to avoid getting trapped within the very narrow conventions of this one small genre. The piece focuses on the murder-mystery, but I wanted to broaden the focus through making intertextual allusion to a wider range of texts. I decided upon an idiosyncratic historical line of murder narratives, where the country house mysteries of Christie et al were planted in the middle. This historical line is intended to be slightly eccentric and I would not claim it to be a genuine, exhaustive representation of the murder-mystery's artistic lineage.

In the performance, this historical line is presented in suitably anti-linear, postmodern manner. Here, though, I shall discuss it in historical order. Chronologically, then, we begin with Shakespeare. The piece draws reference to both *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet* and includes twenty-one different quotations from the two plays. Victorian criminology is referenced throughout, in the form of theories from Havelock Ellis, Galton, Lombroso and Darwin's influence on eugenics. Folk tale and opera combine in the citation of Béla Bartók's opera *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, from which the piece takes its

structure of seven locked doors. Next is the classic country-house murder-mystery typified by Agatha Christie, present here in overt reference to Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926). Last on the sequential line is the slew of Hollywood murder narratives that have at their centre a psychotic, murderous homosexual. Nestled in the middle of that chain are Tamara De Lempicka's art deco paintings, used throughout the piece. I would consider these to be more postmodern bricolage than intertextual reference and so do not discuss them in this section on intertextuality. The board game Cluedo was also referenced through the line of murder props lined up at the front of the stage – a noose, dagger, lead pipe, gun/banana, poison and candlestick. Cluedo was more prominent, though, in the marketing image for the show, which implanted my face onto Cluedo playing cards



4 - On The Edge *marketing image*

Obviously, the most prominent reference is that of the country-house murder mystery. I began with the intention of researching this genre in the usual academic fashion – reading texts, watching films, writing notes on them all.

As my reading continued, though, I came to realise that the individual texts were not advancing my research. In isolation, the texts displayed too much individuality, too many diversions from the generic path. I abandoned my reading and chose to reference this genre mostly through my own memory of the countless film and television adaptations of Miss Marple, Poirot et al.

I was particularly interested in alluding to these adaptations and so used a self-reflexive language where the performance was referred to again and again as a film. Deliberately, this begins in the very first paragraph of the spoken text when the Doctor describes the Inspector's lighting as giving 'a rather *dramatic* effect to his entrance here in the first reel'(3). He later asks 'who can be trusted in these sorts of films?' (4). Similarly, he makes it clear to the audience early on that the inhabitants of this world are fully aware of the fact that they have an audience when he announces 'I began by taking the Inspector on a tour of my magnificently impressive period-drama-style country estate. That way, he could get his bearings and the audience could marvel at the fashionable chinoiserie' (5).

These linguistic references to film are picked up later by most of the other characters. The Spinster, for example, tells the audience that they have met her before and goes on to describe her generic 'role' as Marlene Dietrich in Von Sternberg's *Morocco* (1930) and as the sinisterly sapphic Mrs. Danvers in Hitchcock's adaptation of Du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1940). She ends by telling them 'here I am again, in this picture. Right up-front in the second reel, with they key light at ninety degrees to emphasise my boyish bone structure.' (14). A strong influence here was Gore Vidal's novels *Myra Breckinridge* and *Myron* (1968 and 1974) where the narrator Myra regularly uses films as a comparison and reference to her own life, believing films to be real life and her life to be a film. I felt that this device would work well here to help blur the distinctions between different arts forms, and between 'life' and 'art'.

I wanted the murder narrative to be an allusion to a specific piece and chose Agatha Christie's most celebrated Poirot mystery *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926). My reasoning here was twofold. Firstly, I hoped that some audiences would recognise the narrative itself and so deliberately chose one of Christie's most famous novels. Secondly, for those who did not recognise the citation of Christie, it would hopefully act as an interesting murder narrative in itself. It would be too lengthy and unnecessary to detail all the twists and turns of the murder narrative here but there are footnotes in the script that detail which specific scenes make reference to Christie.

Intertextual reference to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet* appear throughout the play in both direct quotation and narrative allusion. Quotations from *Macbeth* are uttered by all of the suspects and by The Doctor himself. This is made explicit at the beginning of the play when he announces Judith's death in Olivier-like tones:

As they say in *Romeo and Juliet* "Death had sucked the honey of her breath, but had no power yet upon her beauty."¹ Or maybe *Macbeth*... "Her bones are marrowless, her blood is cold. There is no speculation in those eyes that she doth glare with."² (p.8)

Having explicitly introduced the citation of both plays within the text, we see a series of quotations from *Macbeth* referring to murder and specifically using the word blood. Some are parodic and easily recognisable such as 'who would have thought the old gal to have so much blood in her' (9). Others are more 'hidden' within the text such as The Butler saying that 'blood will have blood.' (30). All twenty-one quotations from Shakespeare are cited in the footnoted text attached here as an appendix.

Shakespearean references reach their peak at the climax of the show. Apart from one sentence, The Doctor's final speech is entirely constructed from Shakespeare quotes. The Doctor takes it upon himself to fulfil the psychotic

¹ *Romeo and Juliet* (Act v, sc iii)

² *Macbeth* (Act III, sc iv)

homosexual's filmic prophecy by killing The Inspector, his unrequited love, and then committing suicide. Here, The Doctor alludes to the final scene of *Romeo and Juliet* where Romeo is poisoned and Juliet stabs herself. This is jumbled and juxtaposed with more quotes from Macbeth...

THE DOCTOR: Poison will be your timeless end³, Inspector. You will drink all and leave no friendly drop to help me after.⁴ Good night, good night, parting is such sweet sorrow.⁵ We shall both die here in the family tomb. The Raven himself is hoarse. Make thick my blood, that my keen knife see not the wound it makes.⁶ What is the point of being a psychotic homosexual if I don't get the last bloody word? Is this a dagger I see before me, the handle turned toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee⁷ Oh Happy Dagger! This is thy sheath; there rust and let...me... DIE!⁸ (45)

Whilst the murder narrative of *On the Edge* comes from Christie, the rhythmic structure of the seven locked doors is an explicit reference to Bartók's 1911 opera *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, taken from the folk-tale of the same name. Each of the seven locked doors hides a different environment in which to meet each of the suspects. Some of these locations needed to be reshaped in order to fit within a murder-mystery narrative. For example, Bartók's first room is a torture chamber, which I changed to the Doctor's surgery filled with fearsome medical devices. At some point, though, Bartók's original name for each room is always used. The Spinster, for instance, asks 'why have I been summoned here to this loathsome surgery, this damn torture chamber?' (13).

Whilst researching Victorian criminology, I found that Martin Kemp's *Spectacular Bodies* (2000) offered an excellent, succinct overview and it became the major source for my citations. These are seen in the form of the Doctor's 'amateur sleuth' speeches where he supports his criminological analysis with evidence from Hollywood films. Most prominent of these is Henry Havelock Ellis' 1889 discussion of sexual inversion and mental illness which The Doctor uses as an assessment of The Spinster, The Maid and

³ Juliet in Act V, sc iii

⁴ Juliet in Act V, sc iii

⁵ Juliet in Act II, sc ii

⁶ Lady Macbeth, conflation of three separate lines from Act I, sc iv

⁷ Macbeth in Act II, sc i

⁸ Juliet in Act V, sc iii

eventually of himself. Similarly, Cesare Lombroso (1895) makes an appearance with his assertion that tattoos represent an atavistic and primitive nature, as does Francis Galton's questionable work in the development of eugenics (1883). Images from each of these writers' work is used as a visual counterpoint to the texts and blended with photos of country houses and Tamara de Lempicka's art deco portraiture. My aim here was to make it explicit (albeit through parody) that many of the clichés that we laugh about regarding criminality were once 'serious' theories that affected lives and, more to the point, deaths.

References to Hollywood film are laced throughout the piece with The Doctor frequently using them as examples to back up his misshapen view of Victorian criminology. For instance, in his analysis of *The Bright Young Thing* he says 'Imprinted in my mind I can see the face of... Marlene Dietrich in the final reel of *Witness For The Prosecution*... The fine, feminine features of Barbara Stanwyck in *Double Indemnity*... Madonna in *Body Of Evidence*!!' (27). For me, this gives a quick nod to the notion of hegemony in Hollywood film. Questionable notions such as the mythic, murderous femme fatale are repeated so often and with such conviction that they enter into popular consciousness. The line between what is social fact and what is filmic fiction becomes very blurred indeed. Logic would dictate that there must be some 'real-life' femme fatale murderesses; but there is a concentration of them in Hollywood film that belies their rarity in real life. This is something that becomes crucial as the piece later moves on to discuss Hollywood's slew of psychotic gay killers.

Vito Russo's seminal 1981 book *The Celluloid Closet* was one of the key texts when making the show. I focused particularly on the recurrent appearance of the 'psychotic homosexual' in Hollywood film. Again and again, Hollywood films have shown us characters who are (explicitly or implicitly) homosexual and whose sexuality is closely allied to being psychotic murderers. We see a recurrent binary at work whereby

homosexual, insane and threatening are juxtaposed against heterosexual, reasoned and safe.

My aim in *On The Edge* was to highlight this generic repetition. In bringing it to the foreground, I hoped in some small way to parody and critique the hegemonic effect of these films. It is first mentioned by The Doctor when he asks 'Who can be trusted in these kinds of films? One could turn around to find [...] a psychotic golfing lesbian in the library with the lead piping!' (4).

The Spinster later takes up the baton in her more explicit discussion of the 'threatening' nature of sexual minorities. She makes it clear throughout that she is a lesbian and the style of performance chosen for her was intended to pastiche the cliché of the domineering, masculine dyke with her 'golfing tweeds and mannish gait' (13). It is left to The Doctor, though, to draw sinister illation from her speech when he tells us that Henry Havelock-Ellis makes 'a clear link between this kind of sexually-inverted half-woman and the psychotic mind.' (17)

I aimed to present The Maid as a more rounded 'character' in the traditional dramatic mould as I wanted to give time for a less satirical discussion of Havelock Ellis's theories on sexual inversion and criminality. For me, it was important that at some point in the piece these ideas were discussed without a knowing wink. I wanted to give a small pause for thought as to the historical sources of the psychotic homosexual myth. The Doctor takes us back in to the territory of camp lampooning when he discusses the theme again at the very end of the show before offering a list of many films featuring psychotic homosexual killers. My main source here was, naturally, Russo. At the end of the list, though, I added films from my own research. It was important to me that more recent films such as *The Silence Of The Lambs* (Demme, 1991) and *The Talented Mr Ripley* (Minghella, 2000) were included. I wanted to make clear that the tradition of the psychotic homosexual is alive and well. Were I to restage the show now I would certainly include both Noé's

Irreversible (2003) and Roth's *Hostel* (2006) as recent examples of the institution's rude health. Thus, my overall aim in intertextually referencing Hollywood's obsession with psychotic homosexuals was twofold. Firstly, to give audiences the chance to appreciate the sheer number of films (often famous films that we have seen many times) that use psychotic gay murderers as a central device. Secondly, it was to lampoon the formula, to make it appear ridiculous, formulaic and politically questionable.

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When I began making *Through The Night*, my intention was to create a piece quite different from *On The Edge*. Where *On The Edge* took a thoroughly postmodern view of character and subjectivity, I wanted *Through The Night* to approach character from a more traditional, dramatic position. One reason for this was that I was clear in my mind that *Through The Night* should be a more empathetic and emotionally engaging piece than *On The Edge*. My aim was to use narrative episodes that drew on a dramatic tradition and to alternate them with more abstract, physical episodes that drew on a dance-theatre and performance art tradition. This was one of the ways in which I was seeking to create an open text that could be read in different ways by different people, depending on their own degree of literacy with those different performance forms. Thus, despite the strong dramatic writing strand, there is still a robust element of postmodern intertextuality and allusion.

I feel that the use of a Cinderella / rags-to-riches narrative is ambiguous in terms of postmodern intertextuality. I do, of course, hope that audiences will notice that the story is that of Cinderella and 'transpose one sign system into another', to paraphrase Kristeva (1984). On the other hand, this is a story that has been told and retold many times in many cultures and so to claim it as a postmodern scheme of my own would be fallacious.

I was keen to strike a subtle balance in the use of the narrative. I wanted audiences to notice that it was a Cinderella narrative but at the same time not get mired in finding a direct transposition between every event and character. So, I chose to use some of the original elements and remove others. There are no 'ugly sisters' in the piece, for example, only Stella's oppressive father. There is a Fairy Godmother and a Prince Charming in the forms of Kenny and Lorenzo respectively. However, Stella and Lorenzo share the roles of Prince Charming and Cinderella as they both save each other from different predicaments. The nightclub scene replaces Cinderella's ball and whilst there is no glass slipper, midnight does feature musically as the first word of the song played under Lorenzo's speech. Eventually, Cinderella's carriage becomes 'a neon orange London cab', leaving 'a trail of pumpkin coloured glitter.' (29).

I wanted to add other characters who were not related to the original fairy tale. A strong influence here was Winifred Watson's novel *Miss Pettigrew Lives For A Day* (1938). I was clear from the outset that this should be an influential source, rather than a postmodern intertextual reference. It was not my aim for audiences to transpose Watson's sign system into mine. My reasoning here was purely practical as *Miss Pettigrew* is a little-known novel that few viewers would be likely to recognise.

On the other hand, a text that I was confident in referencing was The Beatles' *Eleanor Rigby* (McCartney, 1966) and there is a series of quotations from the lyrics laced throughout the show. I was eager that Stella's predicament be focused on loneliness, rather than Cinderella's traditional problem of poverty. A key element of the show was a foregrounding of the battle (I use the word consciously) between 'high' and 'low' cultural forms. It seemed apt that The Beatles' music be present in some form as they arguably occupy a unique position in terms of respect offered to the historically 'low' cultural form of the pop song.

As well as the textual quotes, we hear the song played twice in the show, though never in its original form. A bootleg remix that combines a track by Kraftwerk with The Beatles' string arrangement is heard in the nightclub and Kenny performs his gospel moves to Aretha Franklin's live version of the song. This is taken, naturally, from the album *Aretha Live At Filmore West* (1968) that is referenced at the opening of the show. Here, though, another sign system comes into play because Franklin's version of the song is also performed (or perhaps razed) by LaToya in *In The Shade*. Thus *Eleanor Rigby* is used here as both a reference to The Beatles' original version as well as a reference to the third show in this triptych.

This leads us naturally to the ways in which references to popular music weave throughout the piece. The three sources for these are Aretha Franklin, Björk Gudmundsdottir and Gladys Knight, specifically the latter's 1972 performance of the song *Help Me Make It Through The Night* which gives the show its title.

When I began working on the piece, one of my main areas of interest was the types of songs that people listen to when they have a broken heart. Years before I had read an interview with Björk (now untraceable) where she talked about her anger at the ways in which pop music can be culturally undervalued. She said that when you have a broken heart you don't listen to a speech by Bill Clinton, you listen to an Aretha Franklin song on your headphones in the middle of the night. This interview had stayed with me and became one my starting points for *Through The Night*. I was eager to begin with the quote from Björk and then weave together her music with that of Aretha Franklin, particularly as I knew that Aretha would also feature largely in my third show.

The first reference to Björk in the show itself is the one mentioned above which is used to open the show (2). Her song *Headphones* then plays under the Buddhist ritual that marks the true 'opening' of the show. This was

chosen not only for Mika Vainio's atmospheric remix but for the lyrics and theme of the song which are about listening to music on headphones as you fall asleep. Thus, a small nod is made to the previous notion of listening to Aretha on your headphones in the middle of the night. Headphones get a brief mention again when Stella describes doing disco dancing alone in her bedroom (9). In Christine's recorded text (16) she talks about studying at stage school, acting out scenes from musicals and her belief that 'someone would catch me when I fall.' This is a quotation from Björk's song *In The Musical*s which we hear later in the show.



5 – Buddhist ritual at the opening of *Through The Night*

Björk herself arrives as a 'character' (a Derridean ~~character~~, perhaps?) in the scene when I discuss issues of 'high' and 'low' culture (13). My accent slowly morphs into Björk's distinctive mixture of Icelandic and cockney as I move

into another paraphrased quotation from her where she discusses her love of wildlife documentarist David Attenborough and her desire to be his musical equivalent:

It is as if he is the interpreter between the natural world and your Gran who's sat at home watching television. In a similar way I come from this hardcore musical world and I share it with everyone else in a way that anyone could understand.
(14)

Aretha Franklin's first reference is also at the very top of the show, when I urge the audience to 'relax, feel good and loan your soul to use for a few minutes.' This is quotation from the opening of her 1968 album *Live At Filmore West* but is also a self-reflexive reference to the other two shows as both The Doctor and LaToya make the same entreaty at the beginning of their respective shows. As discussed above, Aretha returns later in the show when we hear her version of Eleanor Rigby, taken from the same live album (23). Franklin is then used again in Barbara Blachington's oblique description of her teenage pregnancy (25). She reads Franklin's rendition of *Dark End Of The Street* (1970) as being about fated love between people of different religions. She then says 'I don't know if that's what the writer intended,' Barbara is aware that her reading of the song is a purely personal one. This was itself a delicate allusion towards open texts and reception theory.

Gladys Knight is also introduced in my opening chat. I segue out of Aretha's 'loan us your soul' and into 'I'm imagining a lot of happy people...' (3). For those who did not identify the reference to Knight at the top of the show, her original version is used as the backing to a piece of physical movement (16) where Christine (or possibly myself) takes paparazzi photos of herself. The key use of the song, though, is when Shaneequa/Miss Gina sings the whole song in the nightclub (23). Here we have another self-reflexive reference to *In The Shade*. Shaneequa is the pseudonym that Miss Gina takes on when she passes herself off as a black woman. Indeed, LaToya even claims that the song *Help Me Make It Through The Night* was one that Miss Gina stole from her act.

Finally, it would be impossible to write about intertextual reference in *Through The Night* without making reference to AP's bizarre list of nonsense that stands in the stead of her life story (12). As AP often quotes a text that is also quoted in one of the other two shows, we sometimes see not two but three sign systems coming into play. We see five quotations from *On The Edge*, for example, two of which are also Shakespeare quotes. There are also five quotes from *In The Shade*, one of which is a line from *My Baby Just Cares For Me* (Simone 1957). Thus, I would argue that AP's list represents the zenith of dense intertextual reference in all of the three pieces.

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On The Edge and *Through The Night* had both moved back and forth between narrative events that were intertextual allusion and narrative events that were 'original'. When I began working on *In The Shade*, though, I aimed to create a narrative which was almost entirely referenced from a patchwork of different intertextual sources. My goal was for this to be intelligible in two different ways. Firstly, one could read it as a bricolage of different postmodern intertextual references. Secondly, one could read it as a more straightforward narrative drama. As we discover at the end of the piece, the whole narrative has been taking place within the mind of Reg, a divorced painter-decorator from Streatham. LaToya and Miss Gina have been vying for control of his body throughout the show but they are both figments of his imagination and so the stories that they tell are a patchwork of references to Reg's favourite films and to the lives of the singers he copies.

In contrast, there is intentional ambiguity in the character of Delroy. We do not know if Delroy is also a figment of Reg's imagination or if he was a real boyfriend who Reg killed. Here we see an echo of Dorian Corey, the drag queen featured in *Paris Is Burning* (Livingstone, 1994), who killed his lover and sewed up the corpse in scraps of leather. Artistically, I wanted to give the

impression that Reg has created a whole life story by stitching together scraps of narrative from different sources, in the same way that Dorian Corey sewed together scraps of leather to mummify his lover.

In terms of filmic references for the piece, I focused on three films that hold an iconic status amongst drag queens – Billy Wilder’s *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), Robert Aldrich’s *Whatever Happened To Baby Jane* (1962) and Joseph Mankiewicz’s *All About Eve* (1950). These three films all share narratives which concentrate on the lives of performers and particularly on the binaries of *success / failure* and *solidarity / rivalry*. My intention was to flicker back and forth between references to these films and to the lives of particular black, female singers. Principally these were Aretha Franklin, Tina Turner and Nina Simone but I also drew in mentions of Diana Ross, Billie Holiday and Miriam Makeba. Alongside these references would be an overt discussion of Jenny Livingstone’s 1994 drag documentary *Paris Is Burning*.

References to Wilder’s *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) run throughout the piece in terms of both narrative allusion and direct textual quotation. In LaToya and Delroy we see an intertextual reflection of the relationship between faded movie queen Norma Desmond and young writer Joe Gillis. Norma intends to use Joe’s talents to relaunch her career with a self-penned remake of *Salome*. She wants the film to be directed by Cecil B. De Mille, who is supplanted here by star producer Puff Daddy. She falls in love with Joe and when he decides to leave her, she kills him. This became the basic narrative of *In The Shade*, but I also wanted to make more explicit reference to the film through the use of direct quotation. When Delroy first goes home with LaToya he describes the wind whistling through her house ‘like an old church organ’ (5), in the same way that Joe Gillis describes Norma Desmond’s mansion. In the same speech, he depicts her dead pet monkey and how she goes out in the night to bury the animal. Although this is an echo of Norma Desmond, I was well aware that within a narrative about black American

singers many people would read this as a reference to Michael Jackson's pet monkey Bubbles. I enjoyed this possible slippage between readings.

The most explicit citation of the film is in the use of three key quotations, including Norma Desmond's two most renowned lines – 'nobody walks out on a star' and 'Okay, Mr De Mille, I'm ready for my close-up.' Delroy and LaToya return home in one scene to find someone has daubed excrement on their door. It reads 'Fuck You, Salome' (13). This was intended to be a slightly jarring reference for the viewer and for the friction between the world of the play and the world of *Sunset Boulevard* to be most apparent. LaToya's strange response is to 'become' Norma for a moment when she quotes the lines:

Salome! What a woman. What a part. A princess in love with a holy man. She dances the dance of the seven veils. He rejects her so she lays his head on a golden tray kissing his cold dead lips (13).

The reference to Salome is then left dormant until the end of the show. LaToya and Miss Gina's voices begin to merge together and slip into Norma Desmond's most famous speech where she believes she is on a film set when actually the press have arrived to film her because she killed her lover. The intention here was to highlight the friction between the two sign systems of *In The Shade* and *Sunset Boulevard*. Mr De Mille's name is changed to Puff Daddy. 'Film' is changed to 'album' and 'close-up' is changed to ' cumshot' (33/34). At other points, though, the speech reverts back to Norma completely when she says that 'after *Salome* we'll make another picture, and another picture.' In artistic terms, I aimed for this slippage between sign systems to be like a rip in fabric where one could see through from one world to another. Thus, the traditional delineation of character becomes blurred and I perform an amalgamated mixture of Reg, LaToya, Miss Gina and Norma Desmond.

References to Aldrich's *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane* (1962) begin in the first moment of the show when the wheelchair is seen. This is an allusion

to the wheelchair-bound character of Blanche Hudson. At the same time, though, the wheelchair doubles up as a reference to the 1970s cabaret routines of Bette Midler – one of the drag world's most beloved icons. The name 'LaToya Levine, the toast of Queens' is an allusion to Midler's wheelchair-bound singer 'Delores Delago, the toast of Chicago' (Midler, 1980).

When Miss Gina describes her deteriorating relationship with LaToya, she tells of having her 'legs crushed against the gates of Radio City Roller Rink in Birmingham, Alabama' before going on to add 'I never believed the rumours that LaToya was behind the wheel' (24). This references the opening scene of *Baby Jane* where Blanche gets her legs crushed against the gates while her sister Jane is behind the wheel. The only direct quote from the film is of its most famous line, 'you wouldn't do this to me if I wasn't stuck in this chair,' which Miss Gina appropriates into her 'fake Spanish-speaking routine' to say 'you wouldn't do this to me if I wasn't stuck in this... chair de wheelos' (22).

Intertextual references to Mankiewicz's *All About Eve* (1950) also begin in the first scene of the show. Autograph hunters are a recurrent theme in the film and this is how Delroy first introduces himself to LaToya (4). Later we see Miss Gina and LaToya echo the roles of Eve Harrington and Margo Channing. Like Eve, Miss Gina stalks LaToya and watches her every show. She also goes on to outshine LaToya and win 'the most coveted Mahalia Jackson award for S.O.U.L.' (27) in the same way that we see Eve accept the Sarah Bernhardt award in the film. There is also a series of direct quotations from the film. LaToya's first introduction of herself takes text from the character Addison De Witt when she says 'for those of you who do not read, attend the theatre, listen to non-commercial radio programmes or know anything of the world in which you live it is perhaps necessary for me to introduce myself' (2). She then goes on to quote one of Margo's most infamous lines: 'fasten your seatbelts, it's going to be a bumpy night' (3). In LaToya's bedroom, Delroy says 'the general atmosphere was very

Macbethish' (4), thereby dexterously referencing *All About Eve*, *Macbeth* and *On The Edge* in one short phrase.

LaToya quotes from Margo again when she tells Delroy 'you're not much of a bargain, you know. You're conceited and thoughtless and messy' before going on to say 'me, a fifth-rate vaudevillian? I closed the first half for eleven years and you know it!' (29). She follows this with the longest quote from the film:

Autograph fiends. They're not people. Those little beasts that run around in packs like coyotes. They're nobody's fans. They're juvenile delinquents. They're mental defectives. They're nobody's audience. They never see a play or a movie even. They're never indoors long enough (30)

This quote is also used prominently in Almodovar's film *All About My Mother* (1999), another piece that makes heavy intertextual use of *All About Eve*. The transsexual prostitute Agrado, as played by Antonia San Juan, was also a valuable source for Miss Gina. A key scene at the beginning of *All About My Mother* sees a discussion of the Spanish translation of the title *All About Eve*, which is changed to *Eva Aldesnudo* (Eva Unveiled). We see a very oblique reference to this when Shaneequa reveals herself as being Miss Gina in disguise, repeatedly saying 'I am aldesnudo!... Gina... Aldesnudo!' (22).

In addition to the references to these films, we have allusions to the lives of Franklin, Turner and Simone as well as brief nods towards Holiday, Ross and Makeba. Early in the piece, for example, Delroy describes his life as a piano-playing child prodigy, his failed audition for Juilliard music school and the possible racism of the auditioning panel. This echoes the failure that led Nina Simone to take up a career as a jazz singer. Most prominent reference is in the use of Simone's songs *My Baby Just Cares For Me* (1957) and *Pirate Jenny* (1964). However, LaToya also gives a brief, idiosyncratic overview of Simone's life by quoting directly from a series of Simone's performances. As well as this, the particular quotation 'We're all gonna die and die like flies'

from *Mississippi Goddam* (1964) is used twice in the show (5 and 16) both in relation to Delroy and LaToya's unsafe sex and Delroy's desire to become deliberately infected with HIV.

Aretha Franklin's most prominent appearance is, unsurprisingly, in the use of *Respect* as the opening number. Here, we reference the 1968 recording on *Live At Filmore West* that is markedly faster in tempo than the original (as described by me in the opening to *Through The Night*). An allusion to Franklin's life story is made when LaToya describes her early life with a famous Baptist preacher for a father. Like Franklin, she says 'at the age of fourteen I was already doing solos at the front of the church, singing and playing the piano' (6) before going on to sing 'does anybody mind if I just moan a little while,' a pastiche of the fourteen year old Aretha's gospel recordings (Franklin, 1956). We later reference another of Franklin's high-tempo live performances in the use of her gospel-style rendition of *Eleanor Rigby*. This is preceded by another Filmore West quote when LaToya opens the second act by asking 'does anybody feel like hearing the blues?' (18).

Like Franklin and Simone, Tina Turner is given two songs in the show. *Private Dancer* (1984) is one of the most well known songs from her solo career, whilst *Proud Mary* (1971) was the only song from the Ike and Tina Turner revue which she kept in her repertoire throughout her later solo years. The exhausting dance routine that LaToya performs is the original routine choreographed by Turner. Other than her music, the most well-known aspect of Turner's life is her abusive relationship with Ike Turner that was documented in her 1986 autobiography as well as Brian Gibson's 1993 biopic *What's Love Got To Do With It*.

In LaToya's narrative, she tells us of the same punishing touring schedule as the Ike and Tina revue (10) and later details her abusive relationship, making reference to real incidents that Turner recounts in her autobiography where Ike Turner broke her wrist, stuck a lit cigarette up her nose and broke her

jaw. As well as the acts of violence, another allusion to Turner's life is seen in LaToya's 'newfound Buddhist faith' which inspires her to leave her abusive relationship. I was enthusiastic about including reference to Turner's Buddhist faith as this would in turn create another echo of the Buddhist references in *Through The Night*. A more oblique reference to Turner's life comes later in the show. LaToya performs at The Ritz club in New York city in order to showcase her talents and relaunch her career (29). Miss Gina describes her excitement at seeing Mick Jagger and David Bowie in the audience. Only viewers who have read Turner's autobiography or seen Gibson's film would notice that this, too, is taken from Turner's life. Her showcase at The Ritz sealed her solo recording contract after Bowie invited record executives to the show.

References to other singers are smaller but no less significant. LaToya explains that she had a relationship with the manager of the band and Miss Gina goes on to tell us that LaToya was favoured and the name of the band was changed to 'LaToya Levine *and* the Skylarks' (21/22). This is an allusion to the way in which Diana Ross' relationship with the manager of The Supremes led to her being promoted as the lead singer of the group, which was then renamed 'Diana Ross and The Supremes'. When LaToya tells us 'I was born Eleanor Fagin' (6) she is using the real name of Billie Holiday, who she psychically 'channels' later in the show.

Miriam Makeba is the singer used here that is least well known to British audiences, despite being the first internationally successful African musician, often dubbed 'Mama Africa' and 'the empress of African song' (African Music Encyclopaedia, available at <http://africanmusic.org/artists/makeba.html>). Artistically and discursively, I felt it was important to include an African black woman amongst the singers. I wanted to highlight issues of authenticity and appropriation not only of white people singing in a black style but also of some black Americans appropriating 'Africa' and a fictitious 'African' style. I will discuss this in more depth in my chapter on race issues.

In terms of intertextuality, though, we first see allusion to Makeba in Miss Gina's description of the band called The Skylarks, which was the name of Makeba's girl group. Makeba's main appearance in the show is, naturally, the use of her 1967 worldwide hit *Pata Pata*. Makeba returns a couple of scenes later as LaToya's fairy godmother, in order to whisk her away to New York to perform her showcase at The Ritz. As a reference to *Through The Night*, she arrives in a 'neon orange London cab' and her door is opened by 'a big old mouse in a clown costume' (28). This is accompanied by the same piece of 'magical' zither music in both shows. Makeba describes the trials and tribulations of both her life and career in the direct interview quote 'People keep beating me on the head with a hammer... and I keep getting up!' (Stan, 2000) I was pleased to find this quote as it echoed Miss Gina's earlier mention of the sexual tricks that LaToya is able to perform with a hammer (9) and foreshadows the discovery of Delroy's corpse accompanied by 'a hammer and lots of blood' (31).

As well as the three Hollywood films and the lives of the singers, a key reference point in the film is Jenny Livingstone's 1994 documentary *Paris Is Burning*. Livingstone spent time documenting the lives and relationships of the New York drag queens who developed the dance craze of 'voguing', years before Madonna used it as the basis for her hit song. There are two descriptions of *Paris Is Burning* in the show that speak for themselves without further explanation here. However, I would note that the later description of the corpse found in Dorian Corey's apartment is not a fiction. Many audience members presumed that this was something I had invented but it is not. I read about it at the time in a magazine article that is now untraceable but whilst writing the show I found a more detailed description of Corey in Michael Cunningham's article *The Slap Of Love* (available online at www.opencity.org/cunningham.html, cited 26 March 2006).

There were two other key sources for the piece that I feel it is appropriate to detail here. In Diamanda Galás' track *The Sporting Life* (1994) we hear her perform in a series of different Hispanic accents that are both comic and fairly threatening as the song tells us of a group of murderous women who kidnap a man in order to anally rape him with a crowbar and then murder him. This also relates to the interview with Galás in the book *Angry Women* (Juno ed., 1991) where she discusses her early life on the streets of Oakland with a group of transsexual prostitutes. She would work the streets with a 'girl' called Miss Gina from Argentina and the two of them would perform a 'fake Spanish-speaking routine.' All of this was worked in to the piece. Also, a major source for the show as a whole was Sandra Bernhard's 1990 film *Without You I'm Nothing*. This shows a fictionalised Bernhard performing in an LA supper club to a bemused all-black audience while she opens the show in full African garb singing Nina Simone's race anthem *Four Women*. Bernhard's influence can also be seen in LaToya's drawling accent and in the referencing of Sylvester's 1978 song *You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)*.

Overall, then, my intention with the use of intertextuality was to cite a wide range of cultural texts in the hope of creating a dense web of references which could be read in different ways by different people, depending on their knowledge of the cited texts. However, I did not use intertextuality as a creative tool in isolation from other elements of postmodernism and identity politics. It was engaged in a symbiotic relationship with the other theoretical elements. As we shall see in the following section, there was a close relationship between intertextual reference and postmodern subjectivity. In *On The Edge*, for example, characters use intertextual reference as a way of underlining their postmodern subjectivity, of foregrounding the high degree to which they are self-consciously constructed, clichéd and unreal. It was hoped that this co-dependent relationship between intertextuality and other elements could help to create a certain postmodern slippage between the different texts where neither my texts nor the texts I cite have supremacy over the other. The interpretative potential of each show changes radically

depending on the knowledge that each individual viewer has of each of the cited texts and this was one of the key ways in which I aimed to create performance texts which were open to a wide range of polysemantic readings.

Postmodern subjectivity

The aim to question the notion of dramatic character was present in all three of the pieces, but to very differing degrees. *Through The Night* featured it the least, and mainly through my own 'performing' of myself and the question of whether or not Stella was 'real' or 'fictional'. *In The Shade* sees dramatic characters who can morph from one into another, be psychically channelled and do battle within one physical body. Here, then, the traditional notion of dramatic character is clearly disturbed. The use of the psychic in the narrative forces the notion of character to become more malleable and therefore uncertain.

It is in *On The Edge*, though, that the notion of postmodern subjectivity is most overtly used. The characters are fully aware of the fact that they are not 'real' people, nor are they fictional characters being played by actors. They inhabit an ambiguous space where character, 'actor' and intertextual self-consciousness all meld together. This is very closely linked to the use of simulacra and simulation, as discussed later. The Spinster, for instance, describes herself as 'being' Marlene Dietrich, as well as 'being' the character of Mrs Danvers, whilst at the same time offering bibliographic references for both as if she is researching them. Similarly, The Butler is well aware of his generic construction when he says 'I've done well. Star of the show, you might say. You see, there's always a butler, in this kind of thing, always a butler' (29).

We see in both *The Butler* and *The Spinster* a self-reflexive awareness of the construction of their 'identity' as a cliché-ridden illusion that inhabits a liminal space between a dramatic character and an actor discussing the character they play. In the use of these artistic structures I hoped to create a narrative piece of work that simultaneously disturbed that notion of drama and character through postmodern elements of parody, mixing of genres and privileging the mimetic.

Parody, pastiche, irony and mixing of genres

Parody, pastiche and irony are stylistic devices so deeply ingrained in the work that it seems almost redundant to discuss them here. All three of the pieces are parodic reworkings of other genres and involve an ironic questioning of those genres. I would hope that this aspect of the work can speak eloquently for itself without further clarification here. My aim was to use these stylistic elements as a way of questioning the genres. This was particularly true of *On The Edge*, where my intention was to 'read against the grain' of the power structures within the genre in order to dilute its cultural power to some small degree. In *Through The Night*, parody, pastiche and irony are less directed towards the Cinderella narrative and more towards social observation about celebrity culture. *In The Shade* offers a parody of white performers who appropriate a black style, as well as a pastiche of drag queens and their excessive mores.

The mixing of different genres was something central to the whole project. Overarching all three pieces was the intention to combine dramatic, narrative performance with aspects of performance art and particularly the cultural theory that supposedly underpins much of that performance art. As the work developed, I found that I was more interested in the challenge of finding a seamless combination of narrative work and cultural theory than I was in drawing on the stylistic conventions of performance art. Thus, *Through The Night* was actually the only piece that truly represented a sustained use of both narrative and non-narrative episodes.

My reason for working in that way was contextual. Artistically, I felt that there are plenty of good dramatists working in the area of new writing and creating work in the traditional mould of the well-made play. At the same time, I felt that there are plenty of performance artists creating more abstract work that is usually non-narrative, and focuses on a physical and visual language as

well as a heavy use of 'confessional' or autobiographical writing. It is often informed by the cultural theories that we are discussing in this thesis. So in an effort to create work that was moving forward from what had come before, I aimed to combine elements of both genres. On a very basic level, I had wondered in the past why new writing so rarely engages with cultural theory and also why performance art so rarely engages with fictional narratives. I wanted to create work which filled that gap.

To some extent or another, all three of the pieces mix together different genres. Whilst *On The Edge* mostly confines itself to being a pastiche of the murder-mystery, there are certainly elements of different genres and forms appearing in the piece. The show opens with the use of a comic dance that acts as a physical overture to introduce the murder-mystery pastiche. Later comes a brief shift towards both musical theatre and jazz through the use of Cole Porter's *I've Got You Under My Skin* (1936). At the same time, the murder-mystery itself does not limit itself to one genre but flickers between the country house murder narrative typified by Agatha Christie and references to a wide range of Hollywood murder narratives.

I aimed for the dance to act as a physical overture to the performance as well as to reference silent movie acting tropes and introduce the comic tone of the show. My intention here was to interweave the physical moves from the dance into the rest of the show, and vice versa. Thus, the moves in the dance would take a compositional role akin to that of a musical overture, where the main musical themes of the piece are introduced before the main action of the piece. For example, the toe-to-heel walking that the doctor uses when giving the Inspector a tour of the house (5) and the Doctor's final pose, holding his knife aloft (45), are both first seen in the opening dance.

There is only one 'hint' towards the language of live / performance art. There are various 'blue interval' sections in the piece where Arvo Pärt's music is played as I walk around the stage doing little more than dusting. The use of a

more abstract, physical and visual language, which one might associate with performance art, goes against the grain of rest of the piece. Here, the notion of character breaks down completely and it is impossible to know whether I am playing one of the characters from the piece or if I am simply performing as myself.

The use of a string quartet gives an initial nod towards the notion of 'the past' and period drama, but Pärt's composition sits slightly off-kilter with this musical presumption by employing a uniquely contemporary style of harmonic minimalism. Implicitly, I felt that this tension between apparently 'classical' music and a more 'contemporary' compositional style offered a subtle metaphor for my theatrical aims in my treatment of the country house murder mystery. On a dramatic level, though, I was well aware of the fact that the music has a strong emotional undertow, particularly in the long opening note. My aim here was to create a performative counterpoint that would encourage audiences to read against the comic grain of the piece and perhaps look for the other dramatic and intellectual layers beneath. Thus, the music is accompanied by a notably serious physical score (later echoed by the 'crying score' in *Through The Night*) which hints at the characters' (or perhaps my own) emotional distress at the content of the piece.

The first version of *On The Edge* did not include the blue intervals. I initially decided to insert them because I felt there was too much fast, dense, textual information for the audience to absorb without respite. Also, on a technical level, the original version of the show was too mentally and vocally demanding to perform without mistakes. So, the impetus for the blue intervals was practical and structural, but the idea was then subjected to the rigorous artistic shaping described above. Thus, I feel that these blue intervals serve as a strong example of way in which practical necessity can lead to a striking artistic discovery which then dramatically changes the tone of the whole performance. This, in turn, serves as an illustration of my 'tacit, embodied' knowledge as an artist coming to the fore (to paraphrase Nelson, 2005)

rather than relying so heavily on cultural theory as described elsewhere in this thesis.

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Through The Night sees the most prominent blending of different genres. Dramatic storytelling is the backbone of the piece and these episodes alternate with more abstract episodes that draw on dance-theatre and performance art. Key to these abstract sections is the 'crying score' of movements (7) where I repeat a series of movements that imply wiping tears away from my face and waving to someone who does not respond. Later in the piece, Kenny lip-synchs to Aretha Franklin's *Eleanor Rigby* (23), combining the gospel moves that he loves with the same 'crying' score from earlier in the piece.

It is in these abstract elements of the show that Buddhist imagery is referred to most strongly. After my introductory chat, I perform a Buddhist ritual involving the lighting of incense, placing of a lotus flower in water and dabbing water on the Buddha's forehead. The lotus flower is referred to again in the creation of 'flour lotuses' (28). Here, flour is used in a deliberate visual pun to create 'flour flowers' at the same time as an atmospheric cloud of 'smoke.' My aim in these sections was to disturb the notion of drama and character and replace it with a more abstract performance style. There is a deliberate ambiguity in these sections as to the degree to which I am performing as myself or performing as one of the characters from the narrative.

The conflict between 'high' and 'low' cultural forms is key to *Through The Night* and this is made explicit not only in my discussion of it but also in the use of both classical and pop music throughout the piece. This was a deliberate use of postmodern bricolage and my intention was for the two to act as a musical metaphor for the more explicit discussions of that theme.

Classical music is present in the recurring use of Lily Laskine's classical harp with pieces by Saint-Saëns, Matiel, Fauré, Tansman and Tournier. There is also the self-reflexive use of Cecilia Bartoli singing *La Cenerentola* (1995), Rossini's operatic rendering of the Cinderella narrative. The use of this piece thus makes a threefold allusion to the Cinderella narrative, Lorenzo Cenerentola's surname and Nick's reference to Cecilia Bartoli (17). These classical music references are then intercut with a wide range of pop music from Aretha Franklin, Björk, Gladys Knight, The Beatles, Portishead, KRS-One, Lena Horne, Alison Moyet and various Japanese pop groups. Should the reader wish to read complete (indeed, exhaustive) details of the music used in the piece then it can be found in the footnotes to the scripts in the appendix.

Another important use of blended genres comes in the brief, but I believe pertinent, references to pantomime. Artistically, I felt it important to make some nod towards the fact that Cinderella is most commonly performed in Britain not as classical opera, but as a pantomime,. This also fitted in well with my objective of mixing high and low cultural forms. Pantomime first appears in the 'Vogue Buddhism chat' (17), when the story of the avaricious mouse is interrupted by a shout of 'Oh yes it is... oh no it's not.' Later, when Stella and Lorenzo are about to get into their cab/pumpkin carriage, the Magic Voice alludes to the fact that Stella is cast in both the role of Cinderella and the role of Prince Charming when he says that 'Stella was like a principal boy in long leather boots and hotpants. She had hoisted him over the wall and together they were making a run for it.' (29)

Something that I felt was key to the mixing of genres was the use of both the fictional, dramatic narrative that we associate with new writing and the personal, confessional texts that are more commonly associated with performance art. The piece deliberately opens with my description of my favourite aunt and her death from cancer, the kind of 'confessional' text that is common in live art. From there we supposedly move into 'fictional' work,

with Stella's story. Later, though, this 'fictional' drama is troubled by the false 'admission' that Stella is a real person. Similarly, the flow of traditional drama is broken by me regularly returning as 'myself' in order to comment on the action or offer a wider commentary on the conflict between 'high' and 'low' cultural forms.

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In The Shade draws less on performance art. Instead, it combines narrative drama with conventions taken from drag cabaret. It also makes some reference to blackface minstrelsy, as I shall discuss later. However, I decided against making this allusion overt through the use of an 'Al Jolson' performance style. I opted instead for Miss Gina using a mudmask in her skincare regime that doubled up as a physical blackface.

The conventions of drag cabaret are seen throughout the piece. Physically, of course, I am dressed in drag throughout. I wear a series of outfits that peel off in layers, intended to give an impression of LaToya / Reg / Miss Gina's transformation from one persona to another, like a snake sloughing its skin. As we will discuss in later chapters on performativity and queer theory, the drag performance involves a semiotic excess, an 'over the top' style where physical mannerisms and vocal action are exaggerated in parodic, extreme ways.

The interface between the conventions of drag cabaret and narrative drama was important. We have seen a small number of dramas that utilise drag, such as Harvey Fierstein's *Torch Song Trilogy* (1988), but still the most common use of drag is in cabaret performance, which one expects to be funny and entertaining. One of my main aims was to disrupt this expectation through combining it with narrative drama that deals with themes of explicit sexuality and violence. My intention was for the show to begin in comic form with only hints of the darker, more menacing material to come. Later, though,

we see very clear changes in tone where the piece moves from the comic to the sexual. Delroy, for example, follows his graphic description of anal sex with LaToya by saying 'I love it when a woman takes control of me like that. I love it.' (11). Similarly, LaToya switches back and forth between comic and dramatic text when she says:

Then one time, I traded my purple mink coat and matching muff for 21 grams of Caramac. He broke my wrist... I blamed myself. I felt I had driven him to it. (10)

By the end of the piece, we have left comedy behind and moved into bleakly dramatic territory. Miss Gina describes Delroy's brain splattered on the floor and a cat rooting around inside his skull before going on to perform Nina Simone's version of *Pirate Jenny* with its menacing query of 'kill them now, or later?' (36). Thus, in the mixing of different genres at this point, my aim was to confound the viewer's expectation of drag performance conventions and moving against the grain of generic convention is one of the ways I hoped to create performance forms which were subtly new and represent a small step forward in the development of those artforms.

Derrida and Deconstruction

One of the 'tools' from cultural theory that was most useful and was used throughout the making of the three pieces was Derrida's notion of *deconstruction*. It is widely recognised that there are varied and sometimes conflicting readings of Derrida's work but I needed a firm starting point from which to make my performances. For this reason, I decided to begin by making my own definition of deconstruction in order to delineate it as a useful creative tool.

In my interpretation of his work, Derrida's semiotic starting point is to accept Ferdinand de Saussure's presupposition that meaning is generated by the relationship between various signifiers, rather than by reference to an independent and objective world. He maintained that 'we think only in signs' (Derrida, 1976, 50), that there is no original meaning circulating outside of representation. Where Derrida moves on, though, is to emphasise that meaning can therefore never be fixed. There is always a degree of slippage and the opportunity to make different readings of any particular text. Given this instability of 'meaning', Derrida progresses to examine the supposedly stable binaries relied upon by structuralism and western thought in general. He makes a case for the 'undecidability' of binary oppositions. He posits that the binary oppositions (such as *male / female* or *reason / madness*) used in the construction of meaning are reliant on a hierarchical relationship that devalues or excludes the 'lesser' side of the binary. The aim of deconstruction, then, is to reveal the power structures upon which a cultural text is based. It does this by laying bare the unacknowledged assumptions upon which a text operates through defining the binary oppositions within that text and identifying the hierarchy between them.

After identifying the hierarchical relationship within a particular binary, Derrida urges us to move on to disturb the meaning of that binary. Here we reach an impasse. In redefining the language with which one discusses the world, one

needs to use that very language. There are terms (such as 'reason', 'truth', 'beauty') that are flawed concepts but which are necessarily useful. Derrida's solution to this problem is to place particular words *under erasure*. This means that the word is written and then scored out. For example, the word 'reason' becomes ~~reason~~. As Spivak explains in her introduction to *Of Grammatology*, 'Since the word is inaccurate, it is crossed out. Since it is necessary, it remains legible' (Spivak, 1976, xiv). Derrida seeks to expose the *undecidability* of meaning within binary oppositions and within philosophical thought. Placing words under erasure in this way has never become common practice, even within the academy. However, the notion of destabilising concepts which we find dubious has entered wider culture through the use of an almost endless stream of quotation marks. Therefore truth becomes 'truth', beauty becomes 'beauty', freedom becomes 'freedom' and so on.

In all three of the shows, I was not interested in simply inverting these binaries. I needed to find a performative equivalent of placing particular concepts under erasure. I did not want to prove, for example, that black people are better than white people or that gay people are superior to straight. Rather, I wanted to foreground these concepts and bring them into question. I wanted to trouble the water of the binaries in order to highlight their dubious and shady (to use LaToya's drag parlance) relationships. Thus, rather than prove black people to be 'better' than white, for instance, the aim would be to bring into question the very racial binary upon which that comparison is based.

I began work on each of the three shows by undertaking a basic deconstruction of the genre I was examining. In *On The Edge*, I was looking at reading against the grain of the country house murder-mystery, showing the ways in which it marginalises particular groups. Indeed, this became the basis for the show's title as I aimed to examine the ways in which the genre puts them *on the edge* in terms of marginalisation and therefore in terms of

mental distress. Artistically, my focus was mainly on issues of sexual identity but I also drew on race and class issues because I wanted to open the piece out to wider themes. I began research by reading the most celebrated novel by the genre's most celebrated author, Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926). As discussed previously, this became the main source for the murder narrative in *On The Edge*, drawing particularly on the device of a murderous narrator and on the murderer's use of a dictaphone to record his victim's voice. I was also particularly influenced by Christie's *A Mysterious Affair At Styles* (1926) and *At Bertram's Hotel* (1965).

As I have noted, the books themselves had given me a good point of reference for the language of the genre ('She's a dear old owl,' for example), but in many ways were not generic *enough* for my project. However, one of the things that did strike me as interesting was the way in which Christie goes to lengths to describe Poirot's mannered personality, his effeminate grooming habits and the particularly close and adoring relationship with his sidekick Hastings (particularly in Christie, 1926). I read a gay subtext here and this became the initial artistic reference point of The Doctor's reverence and eventual love for The Inspector. The binary at work here is, of course, that of *heterosexual / homosexual* and I sought to disrupt and invert this binary through a series of contradictions of sexuality and a series of different characters 'coming out'. For me, this foregrounds the homosexual side of the binary by rewriting the genre and making sexuality an explicit theme where in contrast it is only an implicit one in the original works of the period. In terms of artistic antecedents to this, I was well aware of the work of Sarah Waters' lesbian reworkings of Victorian literature (Waters, 1998, 2002). I was not directly influenced by this work in terms of wanting to write in a similar style to Waters but was interested in following the same artistic operation of rewriting a historical genre.

The next set of binaries that interested me was that of *upper class / working class* and *master / servant*. I brought this binary to the fore by giving both The

Maid and The Butler an awareness and an explicit discussion of their position on the underside of the binary. The Butler describes himself as being on the edge of

the common filthy world he's left behind and the gleaming, posh world he's aiming towards. On the edge of two different worlds and they'll do anything not to go back... anything. (27)

Thus, the binaries of *upper class / working class* and *master / servant* are brought into the foreground of the piece through The Maid and The Butler's candid and self-reflexive discussion of it.

The third binary which I wanted to focus on was that of *native / foreign* and particularly *gentile / Jewish*. Artistically, I felt that anti-semitism was a particularly significant theme because of the fact that country house murder-mysteries are so often set in the period between the first and second world wars. Obviously, this was an era when anti-semitic sentiment was greatly on the rise in Europe and yet this is rarely reflected in the narratives of that genre. These binaries are dealt with through the character of The Foreigner. The Doctor first encounters The Foreigner when he leaves the house at the beginning of the show (5/6) describing him as 'very suspicious' only after hearing his accent. This text is actually a direct reference to an episode from Christie (1926, 45) and served as an apposite starting point from which to introduce this binary. In The Foreigner's text I wanted him to show an appreciation of his underprivileged position as a foreigner and a Jew.

My aim here was to combine discussion of the *native / foreign* and *gentile / Jewish* binaries with the binary of *reality / art*. I wanted to highlight the generic and constructed nature of The Foreigner's character by uniting it with his own awareness of that very construction. I was interested in writing him as a ~~character~~ - to use Derrida's erasure as an artistic tool. As I have already described, I was particularly attracted to the notion that the characters should occupy an 'undecidable' place where they are neither characters nor actors

playing characters. To paraphrase Spivak, the notion of 'character' is inaccurate so it is broken. Since it is necessary, it is still used.

My artistic reference point here was Dennis Potter's *The Singing Detective* (1986) where characters would suddenly become aware of their own construction as characters at the pen of Philip Marlow. I was particularly mindful of the scene in episode 4 where Nicola Marlow and Mark Binnie being to speak their own stage directions and punctuation saying 'I have this awful, dash, he stops himself, comma, and all but shudders, full stop. I have this awful premonition' (Potter, 1986: episode 4). My aim, then, was to take influence from Potter's model and combine it with my own use of Derrida's theories on deconstruction to foreground discussion of the power relationships within those binaries.

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In *Through The Night* I was reading against the grain on two levels. I was deconstructing both *Cinderella* and the countless other narrative copies that it has spawned. I make particular reference in the show, for example, to Cinderella as a pantomime narrative and to the film *Pretty Woman* (Marshall, 1990).

Cinderella purports to be a story about finding love, about the *unloved* / *loved*, *single* / *married* binaries. Behind this narrative, though, there are several other binaries that I was more interested in unpicking. The first is that of *wealth* / *poverty* and the second is that of *low social status* / *high social status*. Cinderella is saved from a life of penury by her prince. My aim here was to question the assumption that material wealth and an ascent in social status would be the answer to Cinderella's woes. Alongside the Cinderella narrative, then, I lay a commentary that drew heavily on Buddhist philosophy. Whilst I myself am a practicing Buddhist, I supported my 'embedded' knowledge with research, principally via Carus (1915) and Snelling (2001).

Throughout the show we see visual references to the lotus flower – a central symbol in Buddhist philosophy. The first of these is a ritualised lighting of incense in front of a Buddha statue and the laying of a lotus flower in a pool of water. Later, we see flour used to make the shape of lotus flowers on the floor. This makes particular reference to the Buddhist chant *nam myoho renge kyo* which describes how the beautiful lotus flower grows in filthy mud. Thus, it is seen as a good metaphor for Buddhist practice where one would aim to exist in the world, but to rise above it and not become mired in worldly concerns. My aim was for Stella to have this personal quality, and for the other characters to notice the peace and calm that she brings about in them. Kenny, for example, tells us that ‘there was something about her that made you feel dead relaxed and like you could pour your heart out’ (21) and AP later explicitly compliments Stella by saying ‘You’re like a flower growing in the mud’ (28).

In the middle of the show, the Buddhist commentary is made slightly more explicit when it is spoken in the form of a whimsical animal fable, a quick reference to Dolly Parton and the use of one of Buddhism’s most well-known maxims – the blazing house (17/18). For political reasons, I was keen to avoid the notion that Cinderella / Stella was in need of salvation by her prince. The first hint of this is in the names given to the substitute prince and Cinderella characters. Stella’s surname, Ashputtle, is the German name for Cinderella. Similarly, Lorenzo’s surname is Cenerentola, the Italian name for Cinderella. Thus I had hoped to give an initial hint to the polyglots and opera fans in the audience that Stella and Lorenzo are *both* in the role of Cinderella and would both be saving each other from different problems.⁹

Later, Lorenzo makes explicit the fact that he is impressed by Stella’s down-to-earth attitude and particularly the fact that she seems disinterested in his wealth: ‘It’s the first time I can think of in years that I’ve been out with a

⁹ A section from Cecilia Bartoli’s recording of the opera (Rossini, 1995) is played under Nick’s speech (p16)

woman who was more concerned about *saving* my money than spending it.' (28). Further explanation is then left to the narrator, using the pantomime-like 'magic voice,' who explains that it was in fact Stella who saved Lorenzo from his own life. Thus, we can see that Stella's character clearly embodies a Buddhist non-attachment to material wealth.

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When I moved on to work on *In The Shade* I found myself deconstructing a social phenomenon, rather than an individual text or genre. The notion of white singers performing in a black style is one that has direct antecedents in blackface minstrelsy and can be seen in singers from Elvis Presley to Eminem to Celine Dion. Specifically here I would identify performers who sing in a vocal style which is directly or closely derived from a style initially developed by black performers. Celine Dion and Christina Aguilera, for example, have a great fondness for multiple arpeggios and grace notes melisma. The vocal lineage of this style leads back to Aretha Franklin and before her to the likes of Mahalia Jackson who developed 'a new strain of Afro-American music which [...] has come to be known as 'gospel'' (Boyer, 1991, 10). One can argue that culturally it is more acceptable for mainstream audiences to see white faces singing in these styles and that the white performers who do so are pilfering from the black artists who came before them.

This leads us on, then, to the second binary that I was interested in here. Wedged between the *black / white* binary and black-face minstrelsy, I would locate the binaries of *original / copy* and *owner / thief*. References and parallels can be found throughout *In The Shade* to the theme of copying and stealing. Sometimes this is narrative and specific, such as Miss Gina stealing LaToya's purple mink jacket and matching muff (22) or stealing her act (25). At other times it is a wider reference to the white artists who perform in a black style. LaToya tells Tina Turner that Mick Jagger 'founded a career on

stealing your moves' (8), and when Delroy discusses the voguing documentary *Paris is Burning* (Livingstone, 1994) he talks about 'the Black drag queens who started it all off before Madonna ripped them off' (5/6). Later in the show it is Miss Gina who talks with ironic reverence of Liza Minelli's concert (as described by Price, 2002 in his Guardian review of Minelli) where she sings a song from the repertoire of soul singer Mary J Blige.

My intent with *In The Shade*, then, was to trouble the binaries of *black / white*, *original / copy* and *owner / thief* by creating a discursive and ambiguous presentation of those binaries. Thus, it followed my intention in all three pieces of using Derridean deconstruction as a tool in performance. Rather than simply inverting the binaries and thus reiterating them, the pieces aimed to present them to audiences as social construction which one should doubt, question and investigate.

Simulacra and Simulation

The simulacrum is never what hides the truth – it is truth that hides the fact that there is none. The simulacrum is true. (Ecclesiastes, as quoted by Baudrillard 1995)

One of the key areas of postmodernism which I looked at in my paper-based research was the work of Jean Baudrillard and his notion of Simulacra and Simulation. Baudrillard's view of postmodern culture is one where we see an endless chain of images which contain no connotational hierarchy. For him there is a breakdown between areas of culture which previously had been discrete and separate. Whilst in the past there was a supposedly clear distinction between what is real and what is unreal, Baudrillard argues that postmodern culture has imploded the boundary between these things. The distinction between art and reality is similarly imploded. Bearing in mind the time at which Baudrillard released these ideas into the world, it seems almost prophetic, particularly in terms of the later explosion of reality television. This breakdown of the borders between what is private and what is public is another area that Baudrillard outlines.

In defining simulacra and simulation, then, we can understand a simulation to be a copy of something original. There was once an original letter which I took to the photocopier to make a copy of the original, for example. A simulacrum though, is a copy which does not have an original referent. A copy of a copy of a copy which has lost sight of its original. Baudrillard argues that the simulacrum becomes *hyper*-real, more real than the real itself. My intention was to find ways of viewing the clichés of my chosen genres as being simulacra, of being copies of copies of copies which have lost connection to any 'original' point of reference.

The piece which took the strongest influence from Baudrillard's notions of simulacra and simulation was *On The Edge*. Artistically, I felt the genre of the country-house murder-mystery was an excellent example of simulacra, a

narrative structure that has been copied and copied so many times as to lose sight of the original version, if there ever was an original. Country house murder-mysteries are not copies of an original 'real' murder, rather they are generic copies of other murder-mystery narratives.

My main aim here was to take the traditional dramatic notion of psychological characterisation and use Baudrillard's theories as a toolbox with which to pick it apart. This appears in the ways in which the characters are created solely as generic subject positions, rather than fully-formed psychological characters with names and backgrounds. For this reason, the main characters were purposely not given names. The Doctor and The Inspector open the show and we soon move on to meet The Butler, The Maid, The Spinster, The Major, The Bright Young Thing and The Foreigner. Intentionally, the only character who does have a name is the corpse, Judith Duncan. Her name draws together two intertextual references which weave throughout the piece. Her first name, Judith, is that of Duke Bluebeard's ill-fated wife (referring specifically to Belá Bartók's operatic version *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, 1911). Her second name, Duncan, is taken from the Shakespearean king who is murdered by Macbeth.

For the reader who is able to follow the reference to its logical conclusion, we implicitly see here several hints from the beginning of the piece as to Judith's fate within the narrative and her relationship with the doctor. Casting The Doctor's wife as Judith implicitly casts him as Duke Bluebeard, revealing his identity as the killer at the top of the show.

As with other intertextual references within the piece, my aim was to create a reference which was double-edged. I did not want a reference which the viewer must 'understand' in order to follow the narrative or the directed reading position of the piece. Rather, my intention was to create an intertextual reference more akin to the hidden door in the hallway of a Cluedo set. When one notices the door, one is able to follow it and see where it

leads. If the reader does not notice the door, then they can walk past without feeling disorientated or excluded from the piece.

Judith being the only character with a name was a deliberate effort to playfully invert the common political problems of the genre in which an anonymous dead woman is so often the starting point of the narrative. Whilst Judith's name is only one small point in the show, the recurring reference to simulacra and simulation is that of the characters themselves. We first see a self-reflexive and ambiguous relationship between realism and generic cliché in *The Spinster* as she offers the audience 'Think Virginia Woolf.... and Vita Sackville-West. Think Gertrude Stein.... and Alice B Toklas. Think Marlene, aah Marlene, in the third reel of *Morocco*, 1930' (12)

If a simulacrum is a copy of a copy of a copy which has lost sight of its original then I aspired here to apply this notion to the individual generic characters themselves. The characters almost take pride in their status as faded copies. Their lack of originality is something that they are well aware of. Their intertextual lineage is something that they parade as a badge of honour. This extends to every aspect of themselves, even their voices. It is The Foreigner who later points out that "this is not my native accent. It's an accent made up by some actor somewhere." (30). The Butler makes most explicit reference to the link between simulacra and simulation and the murder mystery genre when he proudly states "I've done well. Star of the show, you might say. You see, there's always a butler, in this kind of thing, always a butler. Sometimes I've got a big part (You know, "the butler done it") or sometimes I'm quite happy with a little cameo" (27). The Bright Young Thing further develops references to the breakdown between art and reality.

BRIGHT YOUNG THING: In character, I'm not unlike the young, feisty Katharine Hepburn in *Adam's Rib*, 1949. Obviously not to look at. No, in the looks department I'm more of an icy Hitchcock Blonde like... Grace Kelly... Yes, Grace Kelly in *High Society*. Or, maybe, Grace Kelly in *Rear Window*. Or, Grace Kelly in *Dial M For Murder*. (23)

As with all of the characters, the Bright Young Thing is fully aware of her constructed nature and she inhabits a liminal space between being a character and being an actor playing a character. She lays out her intertextual ancestry as if it is her real family tree. Playfully, this is intended to act as a reminder to the viewer as to the parodic nature of the piece and of the characters themselves, to underline the fact that cliché is our business here, that a lack of originality is the terrain that we have chosen to explore.

These references to simulacra and simulation meet their peak when The Maid enters the fray. As discussed elsewhere in this text, The Maid is presented as a realist foil to the other characters. She is written and played in a more traditionally realist-drama style to act contrapuntally to the postmodern parodic excess of the others. She tells the audience:

MAID: . I don't belong here. I'm not like the others. Everyone else, its like you've met them before, in other places. They're not real, not really real, they're all copied from somewhere else, but not copied from real life. (33)

In terms of simulacra and simulation, then, we can arguably regard her as the voice of traditional drama engaging in debate with the voices of postmodern hyper-reality. Traditional realist drama, continued today in the genre of 'new writing,' aims to be a reflection of 'real' life. It aims to be 'original' in the ideas that it presents by focusing on particular narrative or social 'issues'. Postmodern and poststructuralist work, of course, does not hold this aim of 'originality', positing that to be original is a false and unattainable goal. My wish here was to bring the notion of simulacra and simulation to the fore in The Maid's scene. Whilst a small number of audience members will have recognised the origin of the ideas as being from Baudrillard, others will simply have taken the ideas as new. Others, of course, will simply not have noticed that they were there. I felt that this settled well within my objective of creating polysemantic performance texts which are open to diverse interpretations.

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One of my central aims when making *Through The Night* was to address the conflict between supposedly ‘high’ and ‘low’ cultural texts. Running concurrently with this discussion, though, is the friction between the two performance styles that operate in all three of these shows. All three of the pieces aim to take aspects from ‘contemporary performance’ (live art, performance art, total theatre and so on) and combine them with aspects of traditional dramatic narrative. In *Through The Night*, I was particularly interested in the blurred lines between personal confession and dramatic invention.

Much solo performance art uses the device of ‘confessional’ life-writing. As I have formerly cited, examples that seem most relevant here would be the work of Annie Sprinkle, Tim Miller and, more recently, Ursula Martinez. (Sprinkle 1996 and 2003, Martinez 2003, Miller 2003) This performative work is often regarded as being ‘true’, ‘efficacious’ and so on. This is something discussed by Stephen J. Bottoms in his article *The efficacy/effeminacy braid: unpicking the performance studies / theatre studies dichotomy* (2003). This dichotomy between a supposedly ineffectual, effeminate theatrical and the effective, masculine performative is something that can be traced back to the influence of Richard Schechner in his early editorship of *TDR*. As Bottoms writes:

The performative is regarded as active and dynamic, that which *does* things – with words or otherwise – while the theatrical has become increasingly “etiolated” [...] The ruling mythology of performance art is that it is done “for real” rather than “for show.” [...] most forms of theatre tend to be studiously avoided, as if they represent merely the discarded skin from a previous, less efficacious life (173/4/5)

I was interested in exploring and disturbing the conventions of confessional performance art and dramatic narrative through highlighting my own presence on the stage. In *On The Edge*, ‘David Leddy’ had only been present in the role of performer. I never spoke as ‘myself’ or narrated the piece. In *Through The Night*, I wanted to begin the show as ‘myself’, appearing to be chatting and extemporising. In fact, the text was entirely scripted and ad-libs

consisted of only ten or fifteen seconds of material each night. I also wanted to foreground the friction between the two different styles of performance that I was about to reference. In the opening of the show I explain:

Some people think that I'm an actor doing a proper play with characters and a story and wigs.... [...] Some people think that I'm an avant-garde artiste and it must be really personal and confessional(1)

This disclosure that the story is not 'my own' is followed immediately by a contradiction. I follow the conventions of performance art and tell a personal, almost confessional, anecdote. Relating to the theme of pop music, I give a short account of my aunt's funeral and the song that was played there. Having established myself as 'myself', a supposedly 'real' and 'unperformed' storyteller who is simply chatting amiably with the audience, I immediately begin to trouble this relationship by moving into a quotation (3). The first line of the speech is taken from Aretha Franklin's performance of *Respect* on the album *Live At Filmore West* (1968) and is also a self-reflexive reference to *In The Shade*, where LaToya Levine begins her show with the same phrase. The rest of the text is from Gladys Knight's performance of the song *Help Me Make It Through The Night* (1972) which features later in the show. There are undoubtedly some audience members who would recognise the text from such a famous song; whereas others would recognise it later in the performance when the song is played to them.

I later move into more traditional 'dramatic' territory as I play various fictional characters, beginning with Stella herself. However, I continually return in the form of a narrative voice and as 'myself' in the discursive 'chats'. In this sense, I am a continual reminder of the troubled boundary between fact (my real self, my real stories) and fiction. This boundary is further blurred when I tell the audience that Stella is a real person who I met on a train. My influence here was the Coen Brothers' film *Fargo* (1996). Like many films, *Fargo* bills itself as being 'based on a true story'. However, on watching the 'extras' section of the DVD we learn that the narrative is entirely fictional. Thus the Coens have troubled the putative integrity of the *truth / fiction*

binary. I was interested to use the same device in order to further blur the line between my stories and Stella's stories.

To add to this ambiguity, it was decided that the performance of Stella's voice should be very similar to my own, where all of the other characters should be markedly different from my normal speaking voice. This is a performance device which was designedly used in all three performances. The Maid, Stella and Delroy all use the same voice, which is essentially my own. This was intended to act as a reference point between the three pieces of work and as an underlining of my role as writer and performer of the pieces. Implicitly, the use of my own voice reiterates and unhinges the relationship between author and character.



6 - 'Goodnight' from *Through The Night*

Briefly, but vitally, I return as myself at the end of the show in order to give reminder of the gliding duality between Stella and myself.

STELLA: We both smiled, and then he said... Goodnight.

DAVID: Goodnight.

DAVID CLINKS CYMBALS. BLACKOUT (29/30)

The blurring of 'performance artist' and 'character actor' was similarly blurred in the ritualistic and physical sections of the piece, particularly the short, recurring choreography where I wipe tears from my eyes and wave to non-existent people in the distance. This 'crying' score was deliberately left open so that audience members would be left to decide whether the choreography is being performed by 'me' or by Stella. In a subtle way, then, this reaffirms the blurring between character and performer, writer and subject, art and reality.

My aim in the choreography of the crying score was to choose a movement vocabulary with a high degree of ambiguity. This was an effort to create an open choreographic text which could be read in different ways by different people. The movement of wiping my fingertips across my cheeks, for instance, could be read as a movement either of wiping tears or of rubbing the eyes in tiredness. When I quickly raise my right hand to my forehead, one could understand this to be an action of suddenly remembering something, or the action of someone in physical or emotional pain. The action of wiping the hands against each other and then wiping the front of my clothing was a deliberate echo of the movements used in the 'blue interval' sections from *On The Edge*, which I discuss elsewhere in this thesis. My intention in both the 'crying score' and the 'blue intervals' was to use a performative vocabulary that was slightly abstract and ambiguous, thus offering an artistic counterpoint to the more literal, narrative episodes that dominated the shows.

My overarching objective in regard to Baudrillard's simulacra and simulation had been, of course, to use it as an instrument for making performance. I tried to use it as a lens through which to view the clichés of my chosen

genres as copies of copies that have lost connection to any form of an 'original' reference point. This was then mixed together with all the other elements here to become another layer of communication available to the viewer.

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Overall then, my use of postmodern theory focused on five particular areas which all worked interdependently in the shows. Derridean deconstruction underpinned all of the pieces and was the first point of the creative process. Intertextual citation of a wide variety of texts was seen in all three pieces, from Shakespeare to Hollywood film, from popular to classical music. Parody, pastiche and irony as well as a mixing of genres was closely allied to that intertextuality. Postmodern subjectivity was seen, whereby subjectivity is portrayed as split and shifting, questioning the real and privileging the mimetic. In my usage, Baudrillard's simulacra and simulation was applied to that postmodern subjectivity.

I did not want the postmodern aspects of the work to be purely aesthetic or apolitical. For this reason, I chose from the inception of the research to combine the use of postmodernism with identity politics in order to suffuse the work with a more socially and politically engaged layer of meaning. It is this discussion of identity politics which I shall move on to discuss in the next section of this thesis.

PART TWO :

IDENTITY

What it is to be a person, subjectivity, and how we describe ourselves to each other, identity, became central areas of concern in cultural studies during the 1990s. In other words, cultural studies explores how we come to be the kinds of people we are, how we are produced as subjects, and how we identify with (or emotionally invest in) descriptions of ourselves as male or female, black or white, young or old.

(Barker, 2000, 11)

I would like to begin here by offering an overview of the theoretical standpoint on identity that I have used here. Linking closely to the use of postmodernism that we have already discussed, most of the theories here can be seen as falling within a postmodern view of identity. Here I would cite Stuart Hall's definition of the postmodern subject in his article 'The Question of Cultural Identity' (1992). According to Hall's reasoning, the postmodern, decentred self involves the subject in 'contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continually being shifted about' (Hall, 1992, 277).

Following on from this, I wanted to create a series of pieces which presented a postmodern view of identity and which particularly looked at the intersection of four key areas of identity: gender, sexuality, class and race. In cultural theoretical discussion of gender, I chose to focus in on Judith Butler's writing, particularly on her discussion of drag performance. When examining sexuality, I concentrated on Moe Meyer's definition of queer identity intersected with his writings on drag. My reading on class took a more sociological (and less postmodern) turn by centring on notions of culture as class power and the cultural battle between supposedly 'high' and 'low' cultural forms. In relation to race, I read across a wide range of practitioners and theories but drew particularly on E. Patrick Johnson's *Appropriating Blackness* (2003). I will now go on to discuss each of these areas of sexuality, gender, class and race in more detail.

As a gay man, it seemed inevitable to me that notions of gender and sexual identity would feature in this work. Here I chose to focus on Judith Butler's discussions of gender and performativity and also on Moe Meyer's analysis of camp and queer theory. I was very interested in both Butler and Meyer's approach on a metatheoretical level. However, the main thrust of this project has been to use cultural theory as a *practical* tool for the creation of multi-layered performance pieces that are open to different potential readings. Within this area of discussion, I wanted to create representations of gender and sexuality that could provoke discussion on an abstracted, 'highbrow' level such as Butler and Meyer inhabit, as well as a more pragmatic, 'middlebrow' level. My focus here was particularly on concerns with 'positive' and 'negative' representations and supposedly sympathetic and unsympathetic portrayals of dramatic characters, particularly of women and lesbians and gay men. Thus, some of my discussion here moves away from Butler and Meyer's theories into more practical discussions of gender and sexuality and how the texts might direct people to read them in different ways. This was deliberate and was a clear choice on my part from the beginning of the project as I wanted the work to have the opportunity to inhabit both the academy and mainstream theatre venues.

My interest in using Judith Butler as a tool for making performance lies in her focus on the instability of the very notion of identity, particularly gender identity. As well as this, I am personally drawn to her discussion of what she calls the abjection of lesbian and gay subjects by the hegemonic heterosexual imperative. The basis of Butler's concept is a fundamental reversal of the assumptions which follow from Cartesian dualism. Descartes presented us with a dualistic model where the mind and the body were regarded as separate entities. Importantly, this defines a causal relationship between the body and the mind, granting the latter superiority over the former. Thus, Cartesian dualism sees the actions of the body as being a

reflection of some kind of essential aspect of the psyche. Butler reverses this causality. She presents the notion of essential identity, particularly that of gender, as a fiction that has been created by socially coded actions of the body:

Gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self (Butler 1990(a), 270)

Butler herself is careful to define the fact that her notion of performativity should not be understood as the actions of a *self-conscious* actor. Here, she is using performative in the sense of speech act theory, meaning a statement that puts into effect the relation that it names. 'I pronounce you husband and wife' is given as an example. Rather, she states that 'gender is performative in the sense that it constitutes as an effect that very subject it appears to express' (Butler, 1991: 24) She presents all identity categories as necessary fabrications which, though we have to continue using them, should simultaneously be investigated. Here we can see an echo of Derrida's suggestion that words be put under erasure when they represent a concept that is necessary yet unreliable.

Whilst I find Butler's concepts very interesting, I felt artistically that their high level of abstraction made them a difficult tool to use in the creation of performance that would be shown outside the confines of the academy. My instinct as an artist was that Butler's fundamental reversal of Cartesian dualism and the construction of gender was too conceptual a tool to be used in narrative-based performance.

However, one area of discussion that was of great practical relevance to my project was Butler's treatment of drag. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) Butler argues that drag can destabilise gender norms. She suggests that hegemonic heterosexual masculinity is presented as the origin which is to be imitated. However, that heterosexual masculinity

occupies an insecure position and requires constant reiteration in order to bring it into being. Thus, drag can be subversive in that, through a parodying of gender norms, it highlights the performative nature of those norms. When a drag queen performs and parodies femininity, she implicitly highlights the fact that that gender itself is a performance. Butler points out that feminist opposition to drag has traditionally understood cross-dressing as being an uncritical appropriation of misogynistic representations of gender but suggests that the relationship between 'imitation' and 'original' is more complex than this critique allows:

The performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed. But we are actually in the presence of three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance [...] As much as drag creates a unified picture of 'woman' (what its critics often oppose), it also reveals the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence. *In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency.* (Butler 1990(b), 175)

In these performances, I was keen to exploit Butler's 'three contingent dimensions' of anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance through a fast and fluid switching between characters of different genders.

In creating three solo plays with a large number of characters, it was inevitable that I would play both men and women. The notion of 'positive' and 'negative' representations of women was of great concern to me. I certainly wanted to avoid creating text which viewers might read as misogynistic. At the same time, it would be politically counter-productive to avoid 'negative' representations of women by presenting only 'positive' characters because those 'positive' traits are often highly gendered in themselves. For example, one often sees 'positive' fictional women in caring (read mothering) roles or roles where they succeed in a male environment by behaving in a masculine way. Thus, rather than try to supplant 'negative' roles with 'positive' roles, I was keen to approach gender in the performances in an interrogative fashion. I wanted to highlight the constructed, performative and indeed performed nature of gender.

The notion of 'positive' and 'negative' representations was of particular relevance in *On The Edge*. Even if I had wanted to, it would have been impossible to create a series of 'positive' characters, as one of the requisites of the genre is that all of the characters must seem capable of murder. Even in a parody of the genre, I felt that this was a rule which could not be broken. In this sense, then, *none* of the characters should be presented as 'positive' and all of them should be a caricature of characteristics that we perceive as negative. Here, I particularly focused on traits such as avarice, vengefulness, jealousy, blackmail, and ambivalence to the murder of the victim.

In terms of representation of women, my aim was to present Judith, The Spinster and The Bright Young Thing as being gross caricatures that could destabilise and parody gender constructions. At the same time, I wanted to implicitly critique the murder-mystery clichés of the 'bad girl' murder suspect that we see personified in the various Hollywood films referenced in the piece such as *Double Indemnity* (Wilder, 1944), *Basic Instinct* (Verhoeven, 1992) and *Body of Evidence* (Edel, 1992). In The Bright Young Thing, for example, we see a parody of the girlish coquette. The intention with The Bright Young Thing was to offer a parodic representation of a character who uses feminine sexuality to control others through flirtation whilst being completely amoral and self-obsessed. Indirectly, then, it becomes a criticism of the type of 'bad-girls' played by Sharon Stone in *Basic Instinct* and Madonna in *Body Of Evidence*.

At the same time, *On The Edge* presents masculinity as being as much a ridiculous performance as femininity. This is often achieved through voice and body rather than text. Most of the male voices in the piece take the cliché of the deep, masculine voice to extremes. The Inspector uses the lowest voice it was possible for me to achieve without becoming inaudible, whilst the Butler presents a caricature of working class masculinity with his exaggerated soap opera accent. He uses time-worn physical signifiers of

masculinity such as a wide stance, swaggering walk, physical shrugs, pulling of sleeves, and eventually the hardened 'pursed lips' that are his final frozen expression. In contrast to the other men in the piece, The Doctor uses a high, nasal and rather camp voice befitting to his 'secret and shameful' homosexuality.

Obviously, *On The Edge* involves wearing only one costume and so the physical accoutrements of drag were unavailable to me, apart from The Bright Young Thing's headscarf and sunglasses. Artistically, this was a deliberate choice. I knew that *In The Shade* would make extensive use of drag costume and so decided to avoid drag costume in the other two shows so as to prevent artistic repetition. However, I would argue that Judith, The Bright Young Thing and The Spinster all make use of drag conventions in their performance. My portrayal of all three of them involves an overplaying, a semiotic over-signification which is common in drag queens' performance style. Facial expressions are exaggerated and vocal qualities are amplified and overstressed. This is knowingly brought into stark relief when I come to perform The Maid. The decision here was to present The Maid using the conventions of stage realism. Thus, her expressions and vocal qualities are more reminiscent of everyday life.

Particularly, I was interested in using my own, everyday voice in the playing of The Maid. My goal here was to destabilise the notion that for a man to play a woman he must *always* use an excessive, parodic style. Thus, in *On The Edge*, I addressed gender representation in two different ways. One was through a drag-like parody and the other was through an 'unadorned' playing of a woman as being, ultimately, not terribly far from my own everyday gestures and vocal qualities. My object here was to destabilise clichéd representations of gender by questioning it in two different performative methods within the show.

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The device of using an 'unadorned' voice was one that I would deliberately return to in the second and third shows. In *Through The Night* it was used in the role of Stella. Again, the intention here was to use a realist convention to act contrapuntally to the drag-like performances of other characters such as AP, Christine and Linda Langoustine. As with the previous piece, it was necessary for some of the characters to be grotesque to one degree or another as the piece was intended to be a satire of contemporary, celebrity-obsessed media culture. For this reason I chose to present those 'negative' characters as clear caricatures who stood in contrast to Stella and Lorenzo who are both played through the conventions of realism.



7 - Linda Langoustine in *Through The Night*

The most extreme of these satirical caricatures, I would argue, is Lorenzo's minor celebrity girlfriend, Linda Langoustine. My intention here was to make an only slightly veiled caricature of the glamour model Jordan. In order to

emphasise Linda/Jordan's ridiculous and drag-like qualities I gave her large, water-filled balloons in place of her silicon breasts. In relation to Butler, then, one could argue that Linda's constructedness, the falseness of her breasts, her obsession with bloneness, serve to remind us of the highly constructed nature of not only her own femininity but of all femininity. In highlighting the falseness of the kind of femininity personified by characters like Linda, the piece arguably draws into question the construction of femininity itself.

Similarly parodic representations of masculinity can be seen in characters such as Stella's father and Nick. In both of these characters I presented the notion of traditional masculinity as being 'powerful', aggressive and abusive. Stella's father, despite being old and infirm, does his best to assert his masculine power over Stella. He heaps verbal abuse on her, accusing her of being selfish, thoughtless, stupid and even that most gendered of insults - a bad cook. This comes as insult to injury after Stella has already heavily implied that her father sexually abused her as a child. In Nick, we see another critique of the abusive masculine stereotype. AP describes him as being 'handy with his fists' (11) and he easily and unkindly dismisses ideas that he doesn't agree with, such as the cultural merits of popular music (17).

In characters such as Linda, Christine, Dad and Nick, I aimed to present excessive satirical caricatures that would not encourage a warm, sympathetic response from the viewer. However, in the character of AP, my goal was to create a similarly excessive character, but who directs the audience towards a more sympathetic reading. AP displays many similar satirical excesses to the other characters. She leads a lifestyle that is completely alien to Stella, involving recreational drugs, mildly sado-masochistic sex and even losing a digit in some sort of mysterious 'gambling accident' (11).

At the same time, though, she is written as being genuinely interested in Stella and admiring of her. The high esteem in which she holds our hero, Stella, is intended to direct the audience towards an emotionally warmer

reading of her than of the other characters. I did not want to create a binary whereby Stella was positively aligned with 'purity', poverty and unworldliness where all the other characters are negatively aligned with worldly concerns such as sex, homosexuality, drugs, mass media, the music industry and so on. Thus, AP is written as being a very worldly woman who is highly sexual, takes recreational drugs and at the same time is successful in her career without taking too seriously the trappings of her media lifestyle. Most importantly, she sees Stella's potential for a more fulfilled life where her father and the woman in the employment agency did not. Here, then, I hoped to create a more ambiguous relationship between the positive and negative representations of 'moral' issues within the piece and move into a more complex discursive space.

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From the inception of these three pieces, my intention was that *In The Shade* would present a more complex and contradictory view of gender than the other two pieces. It is in the characters of LaToya / Miss Gina and ultimately the shadowy character of Reg, that Butler's concepts of gender performativity were employed. My aim was to create characters whose gender was fluid, ambiguous and highly performed in order to 'implicitly reveal the imitative structure of gender itself', to paraphrase Butler. I wanted to create characters who inhabited a liminal gendered space where our perception of whether they are 'truly' male or female changes as the piece develops. Thus, the piece encourages the audience to change their opinion from one scene to the next as to whether LaToya and Gina are 'real' women or 'false' women.

In the opening scenes of the piece, LaToya is implied to be a female character. Delroy refers to her only using the feminine pronoun 'she' and describes her as a 'big beautiful woman' (4). This was a deliberately ambiguous use of drag and transsexual linguistic habits where people will usually be referred to by the gender pronoun that they have chosen rather than the one culturally prescribed by their genitals. Thus, the audience are

directed towards reading David Leddy as being in drag, playing LaToya Levine - a female character. This implicit image of LaToya as a woman is later broken when Delroy describes having sex with her. He says that LaToya wants to 'top' him, a particularly gay linguistic term meaning to be the active, penetrative partner in anal sex. For clarity, he goes on to specify that he likes having 'things up his arse' and says that LaToya 'lubed me up and got inside me'. The ambiguity of gender is then compounded through the use of different character voices. LaToya's phrase 'Get on your knees, my little bitch' (12) is performed in a particularly deep and masculine voice - the same voice, it should be noted, that mysteriously shouted 'open the fucking door' at the start of the show. The masculine implications of this voice are immediately contradicted by Delroy's sweetly comic admission that he loves it 'when a woman takes control'.

Thus LaToya is presented to the audience as being neither and both male and female in that she is described as being a woman but is evidently speaking as a man and taking the traditionally male role during penetrative sex. Thus we could argue that LaToya is presented as a Derridean ~~woman~~ who disturbs gender binaries to an extent that they are put under erasure. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the climactic climax of the scene (all tautology intended) where Delroy tells us that '*she* came inside me.'

A gendered vapourousness also surrounds Delroy and LaToya's fetishistic use of verbal abuse during sex. LaToya insults Delroy only with feminine terms, referring to him as a bitch, slut and 'dirty little whore'. This draws Delroy's gender into a more indistinct linguistic location where he takes on and consciously enjoys performing the negative sexual roles traditionally ascribed to sexually active women. Thus, his identity as a 'man' is brought into question as he derives pleasure from acting out the role of the female 'cumslut' (12).



8 - Miss Gina in her wheelchair

The character of Miss Gina is initially presented in a fairly genderless way. She is not given a name and could be read either as David Leddy playing a female character or as David Leddy playing a male character who is impersonating a female character. Her position on the gender continuum remains indistinct. She does tell us that LaToya lent her the money to have breast implants (9). My initial intention was for this to indicate that Gina was a biological man who had silicone breasts. However, I later realised that Gina's gender remains in an entirely fluid position throughout the piece. After all, it is

more common for women than men to have silicone breast implants. She tells us that she enrolled in a Women's Studies degree, paid for by her earning as a prostitute, but again neither of these things are reliant on her being a 'real' man or a 'real' woman, or on self-identifying with either position.

LaToya and Miss Gina are juxtaposed with Delroy's descriptions of the subjects of Jenny Livingstone's drag documentary *Paris is Burning* (1994). I was particularly interested in describing the 'realness' competitions in the film, whereby contestants have to dress and perform in particular categories such as 'pimp realness', 'glamour realness' and 'executive realness'. Interestingly, for a group of drag queens, the categories cover both genders and 'executive realness' featured men 'dragging up' as men. The winner of the competition is the person who could most easily pass themselves off as a 'real' glamorous woman or executive man. In Butlerian terms, I would argue that the drag queens' competition moves beyond issues of gender and highlights the performed and performative nature of all constructed identity positions. I intended a juxtapositional comparison here with the way in which Miss Gina's identity is fluid, malleable and procedural not only in terms of gender but also in terms of race. In her surgical transformation from Miss Gina to Shaneequa, we see a further stretching and fracturing of the notion of stable identity. Implicitly, the piece is questioning notions of authenticity in both gender and race. If Miss Gina appears to be a woman, or appears to be black, then is she or is she not? If her skin becomes black then can she really be described as still being Hispanic? The piece aims to raise these questions without offering any fixed answers.

The construction of identity is further called into question by the use of 'psychic channelling' as a dramatic device. In *On The Edge and Through The Night*, David Leddy the performer switches from one character to another. However, at the opening of *In The Shade* it is made clear to the viewer that David Leddy is playing the character of LaToya Levine and that it is she who in turn is playing the other characters as she psychically channels them

through her body. LaToya's psychic abilities are deliberately presented as being ridiculous and comic in order to bring them into a more ambiguous space. It highlights the fact that we never know whether LaToya is a 'real' psychic or not. She may be channelling spirits or she may be play-acting. Delroy could be a genuine ghost, channelling unexpectedly through her body, or he could simply be a fiction that LaToya has created as part of the act that she performs alone every night to an empty auditorium in her derelict strip club.

By the end of the piece, another layer is revealed. We see that David Leddy is in fact playing Reg, a divorced painter-decorator from Streatham. Reg, in turn, is impersonating LaToya, a supposedly 'real' disco diva. Delroy reminds Reg that 'the real LaToya Levine went missing in the late seventies. You were her roadie. It was you that drove her away in that purple Luton van' (33). All these layers of identity remain highly ambiguous and contingent because all the characters are being psychically channelled through someone else and could thus be a fiction invented by that character. Here in the final scene, then, the piece playfully reiterates Butler's notion that gender is 'in no way a stable identity or locus of agency' (Butler 1190(a), 270)

In his introduction to *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (1994), Moe Meyer combines concepts from Judith Butler and from Linda Hutcheon in order to advance a new inscription of camp which moves away from the influential definition presented by Susan Sontag in the 1960s. He makes a distinction between *camp* and *Camp*. He defines the former as being apolitical and purely aesthetic and the latter as a tactic of queer parody which 'gains its political validity as an ontological critique' (1994, 2)

'What 'queer' signals is an ontological challenge that displaces bourgeois notions of Self as unique, abiding and continuous while substituting instead a concept of the Self as performative, improvisational, discontinuous and processually constituted by repetitive and stylised acts.' (1994, 2/3)

Meyer posits that 'queer', as a self-elected identity, is a concept that transgresses traditional binaries of gender and sexuality. Someone who identifies as queer can be a man or woman, or in the case of LaToya and Gina, an ambiguous combination of the two. Similarly, queer encompasses those who do not fit easily within a *homosexual / heterosexual* binary. Examples are offered such as men who describe themselves as straight but sometimes have sex with men or celibate lesbians. He argues that 'queer' moves beyond a notion of identity that is sexually defined. Necessarily, the refusal of that sexually defined identity also includes the denial of the difference upon which such identities have been founded and 'it is precisely in the space of this refusal, in the deconstruction of the homo/hetero binary, that the threat and challenge to bourgeois ideology is queerly executed' (1994, 3).

Another vital aspect of Meyer's argument is taken from Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth Century Artforms* (1985). He follows her position that parody has conventionally been a denigrated form of cultural expression. Parody depends on texts which already exist elsewhere in order to fulfil itself. However, it does so within a dominant discourse which

only finds artistic value in the supposedly 'original' and thus deems parody to be a 'copy' that is of little cultural or artistic value. Meyer, though, suggests that parody is the process used by marginalized and disenfranchised groups to advance their own interests. This is done by entering alternative signifying codes into discourse by attaching them to existing structures of signification:

Without the process of parody, the marginalized agent has no access to representation, the apparatus of which is controlled by the dominant order. Camp, as the specifically queer parody, becomes, then, the only process by which the queer is able to enter representations and to produce social visibility. (1994, 11)

This notion of entering alternative signifying codes into an already existing structure of signification is one that was central to my whole project. In all three of these projects, I have aimed to rework an existing and, vitally, *recognisable* structure of signification in the form of an artistic genre. I would argue that a queer aesthetic of parody and Camp semiotic excess permeates all three of the pieces and as such represents a strong example of Meyer's queer visibility.

I would suggest that in *On The Edge* and *Through The Night* this queer sensibility is not demonstrated through specific characters but is established by the work as a whole and by me as a performer. On a narrative level in *On The Edge*, The Doctor is a decidedly un-queer construction. He is a closeted gay man who is married to a lesbian in a 'lavender liaison' and has made stern resolve that neither he nor his wife should indulge their sexual proclivities as he believes them to be a 'terrible crime against nature' (41). On a metaperformative level, however, this narrative is all presented with a Camp semiotic excess that parodies The Doctor's concerns and directs the audience towards a critique of his outdated beliefs. This is achieved both textually and performatively. On a textual level, The Doctor is continually undercut through his own naïve readings of criminology that are usually backed up with questionable and fictional case studies from Hollywood film. On a performative level, my performance style for The Doctor is energetic and excessive in a way that is intended to direct the viewer towards reading

him as ridiculous and away from traditional dramatic notions of personal identification with a hero figure.

~

In *Through The Night*, I chose to place a straight woman at the centre of the piece. This was done for several reasons. I was keen for the work to have a parodic, queer aesthetic but was reluctant for the whole triptych to fall into the category of 'gay work' where a gay writer / performer is perceived as only able to create work about gay experience. I also felt that a gay reworking of the Cinderella myth would not have the cultural resonance that I was looking for. It would not allow me to explore the inherently gendered presumptions that follow Cinderella's low status and the prince's high status and the supposed 'need' that a woman has to be 'rescued' by a wealthier man. As part of my effort to retain a queer aesthetic, though, I did include a gay character in the piece. Kenny, the fashion stylist, takes the role of Fairy Godmother in the piece and gives Stella a boost to her self-esteem by dressing her in AP's clothes and telling her that her fuller figure looks better than that of the glamorous but skeletal AP.

In retrospect, I feel that Kenny is something of a missed opportunity in intellectual and discursive terms. I would argue Kenny as being an unreconstructedly gay character, without much claim to a queer aesthetic. On a purely theatrical level, he was intended to be a warm and charming character who would act contrapuntally to the more harshly parodic characters such as Nick, Linda, Christine and Dad. However, I feel that at the same time, he presents us with a series of gay clichés. He works in fashion, spends time preening his hair, is adoring of diva-like singers such as Whitney Houston and Lena Horne and speaks with a camp nasalised whine. The only atypical aspect of Kenny's character that we see in the show is his love of gospel music, something arguably unusual amongst gay, white Scotsmen. In contrast to the clichés presented by The Doctor in *On The*

Edge, I do not feel that Kenny's truisms of gay identity are questioned or critiqued by the piece as a whole or by the style in which I perform him.



9 - *Kenny in Through The Night*

Initially, Kenny was intended to be another harsh social satire, in line with Linda, Nick et al. My original aim was to use him as a critique of gay men who unthinkingly take on those clichés of gay culture. In later drafts, though, he became a warmer and more sympathetic character through his affectionate relationship with our hero, Stella. Retrospectively, I feel that this move towards a more sympathetic portrayal should have been accompanied by the inclusion of more atypical attributes, similar to his interest in gospel music. This would have helped move him away from the unconscious repetition of gay truisms that he currently represents.

~

I was generally much more satisfied with the ways in which Meyer's concept of Camp and queer were personified in *In The Shade*. I was particularly interested in LaToya demonstrating a queer refusal of the *homosexual / heterosexual* binary that would mirror her refusal of the *male / female* binary discussed earlier in this chapter. As I have discussed elsewhere in this thesis, the notion of the psychotic homosexual is returned to in *In The Shade*, giving a sense of thematic circularity to the three pieces. However, in this reiteration we see a more complex representation of the psychotic homosexual which moves it away from simple ironic parody and places it in a more ambiguous relationship where it is aligned with notions of cultural appropriation where the taking of someone's culture is discursively brought into association with taking their life. Where The Doctor is presented as something of a buffoon, LaToya and Miss Gina are aligned with the notion of cultural theft and performed as something much more malignant and threatening.

Delroy and LaToya's sexuality inhabits an ambiguously queer space. Delroy continually refers to LaToya using the feminine pronoun 'she'. At no point does he discuss that he is having a relationship with a biological man, but he makes it clear to us that he takes a passive role during penetrative sex with the deep-voiced LaToya. Thus, I would argue that the sexuality of both LaToya and Delroy is represented as a refusal of the *homosexual / heterosexual* binary. Notions of homosexuality and heterosexuality rely on a concept of gender which is also stable and binary. A homosexual relationship is, by definition, a relationship between two people of the same gender. Gender itself has been problematised here by LaToya's refusal to fit easily within the confines of the 'male' or the 'female'. Thus *sexual* binaries are also brought into question. If the relationship is with someone who is both (and neither) a man and a woman, then it follows that the relationship itself must be both (and neither) heterosexual and homosexual. Thus, if LaToya is neither comfortably defined as male or female then her sexual relationships must be neither and both homosexual and heterosexual.

It is in Delroy and LaToya's sexual relationship, then, that I feel I was most successful in employing Meyer's definition of 'queer' in performance. I would argue that their relationship is a performative translation of Meyer's notion that queerness posits the notion of identity as being 'performative, improvisational, discontinuous and processually constituted by repetitive and stylised acts.' (1994, 3).

Class

Whilst most of the cultural theory used in this project was drawn from a French philosophical background, I was keen to move in a different direction when focusing on issues of class. Artistically, my intention was to avoid a concentration on abstract philosophical discussions of class and direct more attention to a practical, social discussion that could be applied to artistic work. For this reason, I turned my attention more towards a sociological perspective that centred on the ways in which notions of culture and art intersected with notions of class. As Chris Barker summarises:

Historically the policing of canons of 'good works' has led to the exclusion of popular culture for judgements of quality have derived from an institutionalised and class-based hierarchy of cultural taste. Such a hierarchy, formed within particular social and historical contexts, is employed by its apologists as representative of a universal set of aesthetic criteria. (Barker 2000, 41)

However, judgements about aesthetic quality are always open to contestation and, with the passing of time and the increased interest in popular culture, Barker points out that 'a new set of theorists argued that there were no legitimate grounds for drawing the line between the worthy and the unworthy' (41). I later used this quote directly in the voice of Björk in *Through The Night*. As Pierre Bourdieu (1984) has argued, questions of taste and cultural judgement remain assets in the lines of class distinction and social power. Judgements of aesthetic quality are never simply statements of equal difference; they entail assertions of power, legitimacy and the supposed inferiority of others. The juxtaposition of supposedly 'high' and 'low' cultures, he writes:

is the matrix of all the commonplaces which find such ready acceptance, because behind them lies the whole social order. The network has its ultimate source in the opposition between the 'elite' of the dominant and the 'mass' of the dominated. (Bourdieu, 1984, 468)

As I will discuss later in this thesis, my interest in this notion of culture as class power was partly contextual. When presenting *On The Edge* I was surprised at some people's reactions to the piece. My aim had been to create

a complex, postmodern piece of work that at first glance appeared to be a murder-mystery but which soon developed into something more layered and intricate. However, some viewers felt that I had created simply a light-hearted 'whodunnit' that was of no intellectual depth. Their presumption seemed to be that work which employs a 'low' cultural form can be 'entertaining' but cannot have any artistic or cultural value beyond that. This was very frustrating to me and I wanted to place this discussion in the centre of *Through The Night*, allowing the piece to speak on behalf of all three shows in *The Corbicula Cycle*. I wanted to offer some sort of explicit defence of the use of populist forms within an intellectually complex and multifaceted piece of performance.

The conflict between supposedly 'high' and 'low' cultural forms is mostly played out in *Through The Night* with references to both classical and pop music interwoven throughout the piece. Apart from the use of Cecilia Bartoli singing Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, all of the pieces of classical music are recordings of the classical harpist Lily Laskine. This was intended to give some sense of musical unity in the show as well as echoing the harp that plays under the spoken introduction to Gladys Knight's version of *Help Me Make It Through The Night*.

This conflict between 'high' and 'low' cultural forms is hinted at in Björk's defence of popular music that I mention at the beginning of the show:

She said that when you've got a broken heart, you don't go and listen to a politician's speech, you put on your headphones in the middle of the night and listen to an Aretha Franklin song. And that's what soothes you.(2)

This theme is then returned to in the scene entitled 'Björk culture chat'. In the background, Lily Laskine's harp is deliberately and contrapuntally played beneath the spoken text, playing Tournier's *Etude De Concert*. The discussion between the relative merits of 'high' and 'low' culture becomes explicit when I ironically declare that 'if you have fun when you go to the theatre then it's mindless shit, but if it's boring then it is an intellectual powerhouse' (13). After this, I slowly glide from one accent into another and

become Björk, making the transition clear when I mention that I make pop songs for people all over the world, 'not just in Iceland.' Björk explains:

There are all these theorists arguing that there are no real grounds for drawing the line between what's worthy and unworthy. It means we have to make our own decisions about everything from opera right through to pop songs. (13/14)

The relationship between the avant-garde and the mainstream is also discussed in Björk's metaphor about David Attenborough when she says 'I come from this hardcore musical world and I share it with everyone else in a way that anyone could understand' (14).

Implicitly, I would hope that at least some viewers would read a degree of metaphor between Björk's text and my own work in the show, where practices from live art and concepts from cultural theory are brought into the more accessible context of a comedic, narrative-based performance. Thus, like both Björk and Björk's imagining of David Attenborough, I aim to take ideas from a specialist environment and supplant them into an artistic format that makes those ideas accessible to wider audiences.

In the character of AP's aggressive husband Nick, we see the most explicit discussion of class and culture given by any of the individual characters. He describes going to a funeral where a Bette Midler song is played, a reference to the description of my Aunt Maureen's funeral that was given at the top of the show:

...just as the coffin's sliding into the incinerator, they play a Bette fucking Midler song. I can't bear all that shit about just because it's popular it doesn't mean it's not a classic. Actually, my grandmother did make the point that at least it keeps the lines clear. WE listen to Cecilia Bartoli while they while away the hours with Charlotte Church. (17)

As well as the more explicit discussions of class that relate to conflict between 'high' and 'low' cultural forms, we also see issues of class implicitly included on a narrative level, through the focus on Stella as the play's central

character. Stella's narrative concerns are resolutely working class. How will she make money after leaving the betting shop? Since leaving school, she has been the sole care-giver for her father. Her father's funeral was more expensive than she had expected. She has no formal qualifications and her only work experience is ten years of part-time employment in a betting shop. Employment agencies don't consider her to be a viable candidate for anything other than cleaning jobs. These problems are juxtaposed with the more frivolous concerns of characters such as AP, Christine, Linda and Kenny who are presented as absurd caricatures of British media life, as typified by Christine's representation as a talking copy of *Heat* magazine.

Ultimately, though, I wanted to juxtapose this class-based critique with a softer, more humane treatment of the characters. I was clear that as well as being comic caricatures, I wanted each of them to have a warm, empathetic aspect to their character. This is why we hear each of the characters' 'inner thoughts' as voice-over. The dramatic intention, here, was to draw similarities between the characters. We hear that, like Stella, they have all been lonely, yearned for affection and lost in love.

~

I will not discuss issues of class in *In The Shade* in great depth here. This is because it was not a major focus of the piece as it directed itself more towards issues of race and gender. Obviously, this does not mean that issues of class are not present in the piece. However, my intention was to use the character of Delroy to explore the ways in which issues of race and issues of class intersect with each other. Therefore, I will discuss these issues in more depth later, in my chapter relating to race.

~

Issues of class are present in *On The Edge*, usually in combination with discussion of other issues of marginalisation. The Maid, for instance, makes reference to her lack of agency in relation to her sexuality when she describes the level of freedom available to her in freely expressing her sexuality in her relationship with Judith Duncan:

I've got to be realistic. It's okay for her. It's okay for that Spinster even. They're posh. When you've got money, you can do what you like, it doesn't matter who you upset. But I'm just a servant. If I get myself a *reputation* – for that sort of thing, then... I've got to be careful, that's all I'm saying. (36)

She points out that upper class lesbians such as Judith and The Spinster have a degree of independence that frees them from the risk of social exclusion. However, the character who deals more unequivocally with issues of class is The Butler. He describes his options as a working class boy as being a job in Spitalfields meat market or going into domestic service. He tells the Inspector that 'a cockney butler is caught on the edge of two different worlds. The common filthy world he's left behind and the gleaming, posh world he's aiming towards' (30). He is pleased to have left behind his working class roots and particularly keen not to go back to them, hence his blackmailing of Judith. As I have already discussed, the characters in *On The Edge* are highly aware of their constructed nature. They inhabit a space where character, 'actor' and intertextual self-consciousness all meld together. The Butler relates this postmodern subjectivity to his position as a working class character:

Usually, when I've got my smaller parts I play it up a bit, go all posh. "Has the solid silver service been perfectly polished?" all that. But, if I've got a really meaty role... you know, if I done it, then I play it down, do it all common. (29/30)

My starting point for this was an identification of the binaries at play within the genre. I would argue that the binaries of *working class* / *middle-and-upper class* play an important role in the country-house murder mystery, as does the *servant* / *master* binary. The underprivileged *working class* and *servant* sides of those binaries become allied with 'otherness' and therefore 'suspicion.' My aim was to pastiche this conflation of working class people as

suspicious by presenting it in both an overt and excessive way. The hope here was that this parodic treatment of the subject would both highlight its presence in the genre and diffuse its cultural power to some degree. This excess is both textual and performative. Textually, for instance, we see the use of phrases such as 'ideas above their station' and the description of cockneys as 'money-grubbing'. Performatively, the scene was acted with an exaggerated swagger and slightly comedic cockney accent as well as the use of clown-like facial expressions such as the extremely tight-lipped expression used at the very end of the Butler's scene.

Overall, my objectives in relation to class were modest. In *On The Edge*, I aimed to highlight the *master / servant* binary and to foreground the lack of agency available to working class subjects within the country house murder-mystery genre. In *Through The Night* I wanted issues of class to act as a political backdrop for the more specialised discussion of the conflict between supposedly 'high' and 'low' artistic forms, particularly classical and popular music.

Race

‘Color, for anyone who uses it, or is used by it, is a most complex, calculated and dangerous phenomenon’

James Baldwin, as cited in Johnson 2003, 1
used in the programme for *In The Shade*.

When initially planning The Corbicula Cycle as a triptych, I intended that *In The Shade* would be the show that would focus on issues of race. As I have already mentioned, though, it also turned out to be a issue that I wanted to include in *On The Edge*, though to a much lesser degree. In cultural theoretical terms, my work on *On The Edge* involved the application of deconstruction and postmodern stylistic devices to issues of race. For *In The Shade*, though, I applied specific cultural theory relating to race by academics such as bell hooks and E. Patrick Johnson.

During my research for *On The Edge*, when reading works by Agatha Christie, I was struck by how openly xenophobic the texts were and decided that I should incorporate this into the piece through the inclusion of a foreign character. After experimenting with a middle-eastern character that I was unhappy with, I settled on a central/eastern European character as this would allow me to address notions of racial otherness as well as anti-Semitism. I was enthusiastic to include this as a theme because country house murder-mysteries are so often set in the inter-war period and yet make no reference to the increasingly anti-semitic political climate of that era. The first reference to the Foreigner is when The Doctor meets him outside the front gates of the house:

DOCTOR: His collar was turned up and the brim of his hat was turned down, so I couldn't get a good look at his face. He asked me the time and I noticed from his voice that he was foreign. Very suspicious. (6)

This is a direct reference to a description that Christie herself uses in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926) and a perfect example of the ways in which the murder-mystery genre often defines Otherness as being inevitably

suspicious. The Foreigner is seen as untrustworthy merely by dint of being foreign. Indeed, The Doctor then offers us a misreading of Darwin in order to support this theory when he suggests 'some races are more advanced than others. That is, people of a foreign extraction are backward and prone to immoral behaviour' (32).

The Foreigner himself is happy and proud to fulfill all the clichéd prerequisites of shady foreign characters. After declaring himself to be 'probably Jewish' he cheerfully performs the most formulaic signifiers of Jewish culture. He peppers his speech liberally with the Yiddish exclamation 'oy vey' as well as making a reference to bagels with cream cheese. He describes himself as being a business acquaintance of the murder victim and reveals himself as being an avaricious businessmen, the most potent of all anti-Semitic myths:

FOREIGNER:... I was Judith's business-partner-to-be. She died before the deal could be struck. Such a tragedy... We could have made a fortune together. She liked my ruthless, heartless, merciless business sense and I liked... her money.
(34)

As well as this, he went on to have an affair with Judith's daughter, The Bright Young Thing, who became pregnant. Here we see reference to a social myth commonly associated with 'the other'. Namely, that foreign men are likely to enter 'our' culture, deflower 'our' women and thus sully the race with foreign blood.

As with other parts of the show, my intention in the foreigner's scene was to use parody, pastiche and irony for political purpose. The piece reiterates the clichés of anti-Semitism and the worst truisms relating to a fear of The Other. However, as it does so it presents these ideas with a nod and a wink that direct the audience towards mocking them, towards recognising these ideas as absurd. At the same time, the Foreigner recognises his own constructed nature as a postmodern subject position rather than a fully-formed character:

I'm not really sure quite where I come from because, of course, this is not my native accent. It's an accent made up by some actor somewhere. I can come

from a variety of different foreeeign countries, but I am always untrustworthy and mysterious (33)

Here, then, we see an increasing destabilisation of racist clichés as the piece highlights that the supposed threat the Foreigner presents is a social construction that is applied to 'other' races, no matter where they come from. Again, this is presented within a comic framework in order to go some way towards disabling these discourses of folk devils and moral panic. Thus, whilst race is a small aspect of *On The Edge*, my intention was for it to combine with the other issues within the piece and to create a web of postmodern, parodic critique of the ways in which the murder-mystery genre can demonise marginal social groups.

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When using cultural theoretical discussions of race as tools *In The Shade*, I chose to draw on a wide number of sources. E. Patrick Johnson's questioning of black 'authenticity' as well as his critique of black male homophobia were central to my research as was bell hooks' use of the term 'race' over that of 'ethnicity'. Bogle's writing on black stereotypes such as mammies, bad bucks and tragic mulattoes was also an influence. Notions of cultural hybridisation, creolisation and diaspora, as discussed by Mercer, were of great interest to me. Sociological work of the criminalisation of black subjects in the media (Gilroy, Campbell, Martindale) featured in the work. I sought to balance this with Jhally and Lewis' critique of supposedly 'positive' representations of race in the mass media.

At this point it would be useful to clarify my use of the term 'race' as opposed to other terms such as 'ethnicity'. I am following from bell hooks' assertion in *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (1990) that 'race' is preferable over 'ethnicity' because it is a term which connotes the power of one social group over another and the subjugation of 'the other.' Where 'ethnicity' implies a false equality between different social groups, 'race' carries with it

the culturally loaded connotations of one group being subjugated by another. The mumpsimus of racial subjugation is the central area of discussion in *In The Shade* and so I follow hooks' example.

I was keen to look at the notion of black 'authenticity' and how this relates ethically to the notion of white performers taking on the signifiers of black culture in performance. E. Patrick Johnson's *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity* (2003) was a major source here. Johnson draws into question the notion of authenticity itself, noting that when black Americans have employed the rhetoric of authenticity they have excluded many black people in the process. Women, educated blacks and blacks who do not speak in a black vernacular dialect are excluded from this putative authenticity. He points out that an even more complicated dynamic occurs when white-identified subjects appropriate blackness. He suggests that in many instances whites who perform blackness 'exoticize and/or fetishize' it (4) and that the complicated effect is entangled in 'the historical weight of white skin privilege [which] necessarily engenders a tense relationship with its Others.' (4) However, Johnson does not feel that it was impossible for a white subject to perform blackness in an intelligent and interrogative fashion:

The key here is to be cognizant of the arbitrariness of authenticity, the ways in which it carries with it the dangers of foreclosing the possibilities and understanding. As Henry Louis Gates Jr. reminds us: "No human culture is inaccessible to someone who makes the effort to understand, to learn, to inhabit another world." (Johnson 2003, 3)

Central to *In The Shade* is the parodic treatment of white performers who take on the signifiers of blackness in performance. This is an issue that I first became aware of outside of a cultural theoretical setting. Over ten years ago I read an interview, now untraceable, with white singer Michelle Shocked where she talked about the making of her Country and Bluegrass album *Arkansas Traveler* (1993). She described how her record company had stopped her from using an album cover where she was dressed as a blackface minstrel. She had wanted to foreground the fact that much of the

bluegrass and country-western tradition is founded on black gospel music. Later, Sandra Bernhard took this notion of latter-day minstrelsy as the theme for her film *Without You I'm Nothing* (1990) which was to become a major source for *In The Shade*. In Tina Turner's book *I, Tina* she describes how she and Ike Turner had 'whited up' for an album cover, wearing pale pink make-up as an arch form of remonstrance against white performers who they felt were 'stealing their style.' (Turner and Loder, 1986)

Eric Lott discusses the power-related origins of blackface in *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*. He states that 'the black mask offered a way to play with the collective fears of a degraded and threatening—and male—Other while at the same time maintaining some symbolic control over them' (1995, 25). More specifically, bell hooks (1992) has offered criticism of contemporary artists such as Madonna. In a critique of the documentary *Truth Or Dare: In Bed With Madonna* (Kershishian, 1991) she compares the artist to a plantation mistress, suggesting that Madonna uses black male dancers to give her stage show a transgressive, sexually charged patina.

In his essay *Why Do Whites Sing Black?* (2003), Mike Daley suggests that the colonisation of black music involves a process of 'othering' which defines black culture as subordinate. However, as Stallybrass and White pointed out, this is a highly complex relationship:

A recurrent pattern emerges: the "top" attempts to reject and eliminate the "bottom" for reasons of prestige and status, only to discover, not only that it is in some way frequently dependent on the low-Other ... but also that the top includes that low symbolically, as a primary eroticized constituent of its own fantasy life. The result is a mobile, conflictual fusion of power, fear and desire in the construction of subjectivity. (Stallybrass and White 1971, 5, as cited in Daley 2003, 1)

In relation to this focus on hybridisation and creolisation, I was particularly interested in Mercer's discussion of black hairstyles in *Welcome To The Jungle: New Positions In Black Cultural Studies* (1994). Mercer suggests that

hair is never simply a matter of nature, but always a cultural construction and that hairstyle is a key ethnic signifier, second only to skin pigmentation. In a cultural context where black people, particularly women, were encouraged to straighten their hair and imitate white style, the 'afro' and 'dreadlock' styles became popular as a form of cultural resistance and as a signifier of black 'authenticity.'

I was particularly attentive to this as Miriam Makeba, who was to feature in *In The Shade*, claims to have introduced the afro hairstyle to the United States when she was first seen on the Johnny Carson show (Makeba and Hall, 1998). Mercer argues, though, that the afro and dreadlock styles represented a romanticised and imaginary view of Africa which relied on a European and American view of Africa being 'natural', atavistic and uncultivated. One could particularly see this in the 1970s fashion for enormous afros which would be highly impractical in any hot African country. Indeed, Makeba's own hair would probably not even be considered a 'real' afro by such standards as she never wore it more than a few centimetres long. Mercer goes on to offer a defence of black styles that 'imitate' white hair, pointing out that these styles never really look exactly like white hair. Diasporian black hairstyles involve a creolisation and radical transformation of white hairstyles. They represent a site of cultural exchange, hybridisation, imitation and incorporation.

This had a direct impact on how I made *In The Shade*, particularly on the image that I created for the marketing campaign. My original intention was for LaToya to wear the largest afro wig it was possible to buy. Indeed, I took early photographs using different sized afro wigs. However, after reading Mercer I was keen to use a hybridised hairstyle that better reflected the hybrid character of LaToya, being a mixture of white and black signifiers. I was particularly aware of the ways in which a wig can radically change someone's appearance, all the more so the appearance of a bald man like myself. I made a special trip to London in order to peruse the wig shops in Brixton market. Audience members conversant in popular black culture are

likely to recognise the wig I wear as a style made popular by singer Mary J Blige and this subtle intertextual hint was my main reason for choosing the wig. My hope here was that the notion of creolisation and hybridisation would be present in the very grain of the show through the inescapable visual reference point of LaToya's appearance.



10 - LaToya's wig, in the style of Mary J Blige

The notion of blackface minstrelsy is something that I wanted to communicate in the poster for the show, the portrait from which was designed and photographed by myself. My intention was to signify blackface but using lighting instead of make-up. A bright red laser is trained on my mouth and some viewers read this as an intertextual reference to Laurie

Anderson's video for her song *O Superman* (1981) but this was never my intention. Shadow creates the black face itself, whilst two blue l.e.d. lights are used to illuminate each eye, creating the white circular eyes of the minstrel. The wide-eyed expression used was intended to tread an ambiguous line between being comic and threatening, just as LaToya and Miss Gina themselves would be played in performance.



11 - Poster image for *In The Shade*

Sociological work regarding the criminalisation of black people in popular consciousness was also of interest to me. In Gilroy's *There Ain't No Black In The Union Jack* (1987), we see discussion of the criminalisation of black Britons in the popular press. This is reflected in North American analysis such as Martindale's *The White Press in Black America* (1986) and Campbell's *Race, Myth and the News* (1985) which submit that the most common portrayal of African-Americans in the news is as criminals connected with guns and violence. Poor black people are singled out as being a menace to society through their association with crime, violence, drugs, gangs and teenage pregnancy.

I was keen for Delroy as a character to offer alternatives to these clichés of a poor, black menace. However, I wanted to avoid the timeworn artistic device of presenting 'positive' social images which are naïvely intended to correct the balance of that which has gone before. These kind of positive images are a double-edge sword in political terms. Jhally and Lewis' 1992 critique of *The Cosby Show's* Huxtable family is a good example here. They assert that the Huxtables represent the American dream. The Huxtables implicitly suggest that we live in a meritocracy where success is open to all who work for it. Thus, the Huxtables' success underlines the failure of the majority of black people as individuals, not the failure of structural and systematic inequality in American culture.

In some modest way, I aimed to incorporate these discussions in the show through representations of Delroy's family. His parents are academics from Uganda, presumably forced to flee to the UK as political refugees from Idi Amin's regime in the 1970s. They develop their son's musical talents and encourage him to audition for Juilliard music school. They even go so far as to send him for elocution lessons (14). I was keen, though, to show that Delroy resists this pressure to fall into the cliché of the 'positive' representation of talented, successful, well-spoken black man. He opposes his parents in the elocution lessons, saying 'I didn't want to sound like that. I

wanted to sound like the other kids I went to school with.’ (14). He is also very upbeat about his failure to win a place at Juilliard and his eventual office job. Similarly, I wanted to avoid a representation of the perfect black family by including dialogue about ways in which Delroy’s sister mistreated him as a child:

DELROY: The worst thing was when Bev would sit on my tummy while Charmaine held the cushion over my face. They’d wait and wait until I started to fit. The older I got, the longer it took. One time, when I was about thirteen, I messed my pants. They never did it again. (22)

In representing the ambiguities of race, I wanted to avoid a simplistic *good / bad* binary where Delroy represented goodness and authenticity against LaToya signifying badness and cultural theft. Artistically and intellectually, I was more interested in creating an open, discursive text than a closed, didactic one. A key tool here was Hall’s 1996 suggestion that we should avoid seeking ‘positive’ representation and instead aim for a politics of representation that registers the arbitrariness of signification, and which deconstructs the *black / white* binary. At the same time, he suggests, we should seek to create texts which promote discussions of power relations and which advance the willingness to live with difference.

I was also influenced by Johnson’s critique of the ways in which black American masculinity has historically ‘appropriated signifiers of queerness to stereotype, demean, and repudiate black gay men as well as attempt to delimit the parameters of authentic black masculinity’ (Johnson 2003, 48). I was somewhat uncomfortable with the notion of a white subject (myself) offering yet more criticism of black men. However, as bell hooks suggests, a casting off of essentialism allows us to see subject positions as being an intersection of differing issues. Thus, it is not a betrayal of women to critique white feminism from the perspective of a black woman, or to offer a black feminist critique of the black macho male. By extension, I submit that it is acceptable for a white gay male to offer a critique of black male homophobia.

My aim in the scene '*Delroy's Dancehall Beating*' (29) was to address the issues of homophobia in Jamaican dancehall music where musicians such as Buju Banton and Beenie Man regularly write lyrics involving murder and violence towards lesbians and particularly gay men (Tatchell, 2002 and 2004). It was also intended to trouble the notion of black youths being a danger to white people. Whilst mainstream media often create a *black / white, them / us* binary it is often easy to forget that there is not unity within black communities and that black on black violence is common. For that reason, the scene recounts Delroy being viciously attacked by a group of black men and later receiving yet more violence at the hands of a black police officer.

Later, though, this issue becomes more ambiguous. When Delroy calls LaToya from the police station to tell her about the assault (actually calling him 'Reg' for the first time) she laughs to hear what has happened to him. Afterwards, LaToya smiles as she says 'What a horrible incident, lazy gemma. Delroy will need round the clock care and I can't selfishly let my career stand in the way of love.' (30). Her laughter and lack of genuine shock at Delroy's beating is intended to imply that she was in some way responsible for the attack, possibly having arranged for the men to attack Delroy in order to make him dependent on her in his convalescence. This creates an even more ambiguous representation of the black on black violence as it changes the impetus behind it from simple homophobia and random violence and does not replace it with any firm motivation at all.

Bogle's 1973 book *Toms, Coons, Mullatoes, Mammies and Bucks: an Interpretative History of Black in American Films* outlines the key stereotypes that have historically been employed by Hollywood film in the representation of black subjects. He defines *Toms* as being 'good', submissive blacks, whereas *Coons* are slapstick entertainers and gamblers and *Bad Bucks* are big, strong, violent and oversexed male renegades. *Mammies* are the bossy house servants devoted and subservient to the white family and *The Tragic Mulatto* is a beautiful, exotic mixed-race woman 'stained' with black blood.

Whilst *In The Shade* is not specifically about blacks in *film*, I was keen that these stereotypical characters get at least a mention in the piece. I felt that artistically they had indirect relevance to the issues we were discussing. Delroy makes explicit reference to bad bucks during his description of sex with LaToya (11). After LaToya has arranged for Delroy to be attacked, she says 'I am yo big, bossy Mammy come to take care of you [...] I dedicated myself to that new life as a big mammy for my poor sick coon' (28). When Miss Gina uses plastic surgery to transform her appearance into that of a black woman, LaToya says 'she was working that tragic mulatto thing. The beautiful, exotic woman stained by the black man's blood. Made Mariah Carey look like dog shit.' (25). Here then, I also draw in reference to Mariah Carey's much-discussed 'authenticity' as a soul singer deriving from having a black father. The implication in much media discussion of her has been that whilst she may appear to be a white woman, she has black blood and therefore is a 'real' soul singer. As throughout the show, this was something I was keen to foreground, parody and bring into question.

I was keen that the choice of LaToya's songs should reflect the cultural theoretical discussions within the piece. I began by choosing each of the most famous songs by the key singers: Franklin's *Respect*, Turner's *Private Dancer* and Simone's *My Baby Just Cares For Me*. I felt that the inclusion of their most famous material gave a wider range of options in terms of parodying their vocal style, whilst still being recognisable as an impersonation of the singer in question. It is worth mentioning, though, that all three of these songs were cover versions and thus can be read as a form of appropriation in themselves. *Respect* was originally written and recorded by Otis Redding (1965), *Private Dancer* by Dire Straits' Mark Knopfler (1984) and *My Baby Just Cares For Me* by Walter Donaldson and Gus Khan (1930).

Three other key songs were deliberately chosen in regard to the theme of cultural appropriation. At the closing of act one, LaToya psychically 'channels' Tina Turner for a second time to perform *Proud Mary*. Whilst the

Turners' version is a raucous soul number which transforms itself from 'nice and easy' to a fast-tempo 'nice and rough', the original version was an acoustic, folk-music style number by *Credence Clearwater Revival*. At the opening of act two, we see LaToya's bizarre take on Franklin's rendition of *Eleanor Rigby*, which was also partly chosen as a self-reflexive reference to *Through The Night*. At the climax of the piece we see Miss Gina 'channelling' the spirit of Nina Simone as she sings *Pirate Jenny*, originally from Brecht and Weill's 1928 musical *The Threepenny Opera*.



12 – LaToya performing *Proud Mary*

In all three of these songs, I would argue we can see a refracted view of this cultural appropriation, showing how it can work in the opposite direction, with black performers taking material by white artists. I was particularly interested in *Pirate Jenny* in this context because Simone chose not to transform the song into a black style of performance in the way that Franklin and Turner had. She uses Weill's original musical arrangement without alteration and

turns it into a discussion of race through the addition of the word 'southern' in the line 'this crummy *southern* town and this crummy old hotel' (34). I wanted to avoid creating a didactic piece which implied that white performers should never perform in a black style and this was a major reason for choosing these three songs. Following Hall's suggestion, I wanted to create a text that discussed these power relations and ambiguities, rather than offered a 'positive' or 'negative' reading.

The character of Miss Gina is intended to problematise the black / white binary in the piece by introducing another racial group, American Hispanics, and therefore another form of cultural appropriation. In the scene '*Miss Gina's Back Story*' I aimed to discuss and problematise the clichés of Hispanic representation. In some ways Miss Gina is a comic pastiche of those clichés. She speaks in a strong accent and regularly uses creolised 'Spanglish' expressions such as *hermana-mujer*, a direct and nonsensical translation of 'sister-woman'. At other times, though, she confounds the clichéd expectations. A key example here would be her enrolling in a women's studies degree, which she funds by her work as a transsexual street prostitute(9/10). When she uses the expression 'the sporting life' to signify prostitution, we also have a subtle intertextual reference to Diamanda Galás' 1994 album of the same name. Galás' song served as one of the sources for Miss Gina's character and I wanted to make a restrained reference to this fact. Later in the show, Miss Gina has reconstructive surgery in order to refashion herself as a black woman. She darkens her skin, frizzes her hair and gives herself fuller lips, a wider nose and buttock implants for 'a booty so pert you could stand a pint of Guinness on it' (24)

The goal here was to question and disrupt notions of racial authenticity by the portrayal of a character who is able to 'change' her race and to 'pass' without being 'read' as an imitation (to use the transsexual phraseology of Livingstone's 1994 drag documentary *Paris is Burning*). At the same time, though, this passage brings in reference not only to white performers who

take on the signifiers of Otherness, but also to the specific Japanese craze of ganguro girls. Ganguro, literal meaning 'blackface', was a fad amongst fashionable Tokyo teenagers:

The basic look consists of bleached hair, a deep tan, both black and white eyeliners, false eyelashes, platform shoes (usually sandals or boots), and brightly colored outfits. Where they came from is actually a mystery, no one really knows but there is some speculation that they were girls who were infatuated or fascinated with Janet Jackson or black American musicians or perhaps Naomi Campbell, the supermodel.
(Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ganguro>)

My aim here was to give a playful, but specific cultural example of cultural and racial appropriation outside of the media. Ganguro girls serve as another instance of the fetishisation of the other as well as the 'theft' of that culture's visual signifiers. Notions of cultural appropriation are narratively reflected through the theme of theft which recurs as a leitmotif throughout the piece. LaToya accuses Mick Jagger of stealing Tina Turner's moves (9) and later accuses Chaka Khan of 'copying my voice, stealing my style' (13/14). Shaneequa / Miss Gina steals LaToya and Delroy's toothbrushes when she uses their bathroom (17) and it is LaToya's accusation of theft that results in Miss Gina's dismissal from The Skylarks (24). Later, she also accuses Gina of 'stealing my old moves, my old material' (27) and her ultimate humiliation comes when Puff Daddy stands up during her show and shouts 'You steal from me, white woman. You a thief.' (32). Thus, this recurrent theme of theft was intended to act as a metaphorical reflection of the ways in which mainstream White culture can appropriate aspects of Black culture.

Another characteristic of the piece which was intended to be provocatively discursive rather than simply didactic, was Delroy's sexual fetishisation of racist language. In his description of sex with LaToya he makes it clear to us that he likes it 'nice and rough' with phrases such as 'stick it in my mancunt hard' and 'call me a nigger' (12). This was intended to provoke questions in the audience, both dramatic and cultural, as to why a young black man should become sexually aroused by acting out rape and verbal abuse from a

white person. Later in the piece, LaToya returns to the same racist language when she accuses Delroy and Gina of having engineered her public humiliation at the hands of Puff Daddy:

LATOYA: Porgy, nobody sticks it in your black mammy hole like I do. You get back to picking cotton you little jigaboo cunt. Nobody else knows how to fuck your old, tired, asshole the way you like it, Nigger. (32)

Here though, the language which Delroy had encouraged her to use for his sexual excitement is returned to its more immediate and disturbing purpose of white subjugation of black subject through language. Thus we see demonstrated the problematic ambiguity that can arise from the expropriation of abusive language in a sexually fetishised context.

The inclusion of Miriam Makeba in the piece was intended to act contrapuntally to the use of the other singers featured in the show. My goal was to raise questions regarding black 'authenticity' through the juxtaposition of black *American* singers with a black *African* singer. For this reason, I chose to dress Makeba in a large kaftan of the 'traditional' print commonly associated with African clothing. As an aside, though, it is interesting to note that this 'traditional' African cloth was in fact originally imported by Dutch settlers and sold to Africans in the eighteenth century (Farell, 2004). As in Mercer's critique of the afro, I wanted to imply an imaginary, fictionalised construction of what Europeans and Americans imagine Africa to be. This can be seen in LaToya's demeaning description of the Xhosa language as simply 'clicky-clacky', in her addition of 'natural' bird whistles to the piece and in her faux African dancing. As some small nod to the real world, though, I do sing the original lyrics in Xhosa.

In the final scenes of the piece, the fictionalised Puff Daddy offers a critique of LaToya's minstrelsy when he walks out of her show. This humiliation is the final straw which tips LaToya into the Norma Desmond-esque madness that leads to a battle between her and Miss Gina for the control of the body of Reg. It is deliberately left ambiguous as to which of the 'characters' actually

kills Delroy. Miss Gina claims to have found him already dead, but when she hears him breathing she does not help. She is more interested in going to the stage to sing the final number over his dying body.



13 - Miriam Makeba's 'African' kaftan

In Reg / LaToya / Gina's murder of Delroy we see deliberate echoes of the 'psychotic homosexual' referenced so heavily in *On The Edge*. My goal here was to create a circular self-reflexivity where the first and third parts of the

trptych return to the same subject. It was in reference to this circularity that the three pieces of work were collectively titled *The Corbicula Cycle*, the word 'cycle' delicately directing the viewer towards the circular thematic structure in the three works. The word corbicula itself was chosen to reflect notions of creolisation and hybridisation. The corbicula is the pollen sack on the leg of a honey bee and is of vital importance in cross-pollination and the creation of new hybrid plants. This was intended as a (rather opaque, I admit) metaphor for the ways in which the triptych of shows intend to use cultural theoretical tools to create a hybrid of new writing and performance art.

The title *In The Shade* was intended to have three possible resonances. The one seen most openly in the show is the use of the term 'shade' in drag parlance as a term for disrespect, as in 'do not throw shade on to me, Miss Thing!' (6). A second possible reading is reflected in the narrative whereby both LaToya and Miss Gina make an effort to return to a life in the spotlight. Indeed, when Miss Gina's 'Mahalia Jackson award' is rescinded, LaToya tells us that she 'returned to the shade from whence she came' (27). The third potential reading is in the use of the shade as a racist term to denote people of colour. Amongst some gay men, for example, white men with a sexual interest in black men are sometimes described as 'shade queens'.

I would argue that the title of *The Corbicula Cycle* as well as the titles of the individual shows, represent an instance where my artistic decision making came to the fore. Whilst these titles do not use cultural theory as a tool, I would submit that they are a firm example of the ways in which one can take a rigorous, daedal approach to artistic decision-making in order to create a polysemantic performance text.

To conclude, my overall aims in relation to race were to draw on a wide range of cultural theory. E. Patrick Johnson's questioning of black 'authenticity' as well as his critique of black male homophobia were central to my work. Bogle's writing on black stereotypes was also an influence as were

notions of cultural hybridisation, creolisation and diaspora, as discussed by both Brah and Mercer. Sociological work on the criminalisation of black subjects in the media was balanced out by a critique of supposedly 'positive' representations of race in the mass media. My aim in drawing all of these wide sources together was for the differing theories to contribute to a delineation of postmodern identity where issues of race are treated as split and shifting, raising a series of cultural questions without offering fixed, simplistic answers to the viewer.

I would argue that in *On The Edge*, *Through The Night* and *In The Shade*, I offered an artistic model where representations of race intersect with representations of class, gender and sexuality in such a way as to present the very notion of identity as postmodern, split and shifting. Returning to Hall, then, I would submit that all three of the pieces offer a description of 'contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continually being shifted about' (1992, 277). Ultimately, it is in this shifting view of all the issues discussed in the three pieces that I aimed to offer the viewer a wide range of possible reading positions. I would also submit that it is in the fusing of postmodernism and identity politics that I created an overall creative symbiosis of the two main areas of research presented here: postmodernism and identity.

CONCLUSION AND REACTIONS TO THE WORK

It was Faye Dunaway, when *Bonnie and Clyde* came out, she said she had tried to give people what they wanted... That's a mistake really... I know. You can't do it. You'll use up everything you've got trying to give people what they want.

(Nina Simone, spoken introduction on *Black Gold*, 1970)

Reactions

In the following section, I will outline the various public reactions that the three shows elicited and discuss the ways in which this affected my own view of the research. I follow the example suggested by Robin Nelson (2005) where he submits that a traditionally linear model of research (based on hypothesis, empirical research testability and then proof) is not a useful one in arts practice-based research. He suggests aiming for a balance between 'traditionally theoretical, cognitive-academic knowledge' on the one hand and on the other hand the 'tacit, embodied knowledge' of the practising artist. He proposes that these two areas of knowledge are balanced in a form of triangulation with a critical reflection that includes a discussion of audience reactions to the work. An artist's 'embodied' knowledge is too insubstantial to stand alone as research, as are qualitative accounts of reader responses. However, a triangulation of cognitive academic knowledge, 'embodied' artistic knowledge and qualitative accounts of reader response can 'collectively produce a body of knowledge' as 'one dimension lends conviction to the others' (Nelson 2005, 2).

In the main body of this thesis, I have aimed to give insight into how my cognitive-academic knowledge and my embodied artistic knowledge had a dialogic relationship throughout the process. In this section, we will focus on qualitative accounts of reader response as well as my critical reflection on those responses. Thus it should be stressed that this particular section does not rely on either my cognitive academic knowledge or my embodied artistic knowledge. It focuses on *qualitative* descriptions of reader responses. I chose not to use surveys to gauge audience responses to these shows. Having worked in the past as the director of a large-scale arts festival, I have found that, whilst surveys may have the statistical patina of academic respectability, the results are often of very questionable value in reflecting audience opinion. Thus, I embrace the subjective and qualitative nature of this account.

Overall, reactions to the shows from audiences, press and funding bodies were very positive. Whilst the pieces were often found to be less than perfect, the general feeling tended to be that they were successful and enjoyable shows. As one would expect with comedic solo work, much of the reaction focused on what viewers perceived as my skill and charm as a performer. This tended to be the first and strongest reaction to the shows. However, I focus here on the reactions which touched on the main thrust of the thesis, namely the ways in which the work combined 'low' populist forms with 'high' intellectual content.

From the very first performance, I noticed a difference in reactions from viewers who we could casually describe by the lay terminology of 'high-brow', 'middle-brow' or 'low-brow' in their approach to the work. This was particularly noticeable in relation to the ways that viewers read the difference between artistic form and intellectual content, in that many viewers had great difficulty differentiating between the two. For example, many people made it clear that they would always consider a drag cabaret to be of 'low' cultural value, no matter how 'highbrow' or intellectual its content. In that sense, I certainly found that many audience members followed Bourdieu's assertion that works of art which exhibit a lightness of tone are 'identified with frivolity, being opposed to profundity' (1984, 469). At the same time, I was often startled at the degree to which my parodic reiteration of clichés was read as being 'unoriginal' and reflecting a lack of artistic skill on my part.

On The Edge

Overall, *On The Edge* was received warmly by audiences, press and funders. However, I noted that viewers often did not discern any difference between the intellectual content of my show and a simpler 'spoof' of the murder-mystery genre. There were, however, some audience members who felt that

there was intellectual depth beneath the show's accessibly comic façade. I was particularly interested in the reactions of one viewer who talked to me about the extreme difference in reactions between himself and his partner. This seemed to sum up the divided reactions that the piece induced in audience members. For my research, I asked him to clarify his experience in an email to me:

Nick was definitely struggling with "On The Edge". Though he understood the basic concept, that the show was loosely a murder mystery, he didn't quite understand the way the performance deviated from the format in order to begin to deconstruct the stereotyped characters and the historical theories and prejudices upon which they were based. (Miller, email response 17 Oct 06)

It interested me that so many people understood the comedic and parodic tone of the piece as meaning that it *must* be without intellectual content, and thus ignored any such content which did come along in the piece. I was particularly aware that the piece was sometimes criticised as being clichéd and lacking originality. My intention had been to present the clichés in the piece as a critical parody, but many viewers simply read them as an unwitting repetition and as representing a lack of artistic skill on my part.

Press reactions were mostly positive, usually commenting on my perceived 'talent' and 'charisma' as a performer. Whilst reviewers did usually acknowledge that the piece had intellectual aspirations, they generally reacted sceptically to this notion. Andrew Eaton, for example, in *The Scotsman*, gives the piece a good review but finds the politics of the show lacking in subtlety:

Leddy has more on his mind than affectionate spoofing [...] However the political element is forced in so heavy-handedly that it throws the rest of the show off balance. (Eaton, 28 Nov 2001).

In contrast, Mark Brown in *Scotland on Sunday* describes the piece as being 'mannered and static,' as well as 'long and unengaging' before summing up 'If this was a university lecture, which, occasionally, it almost becomes, it would be a winner. As theatre, however, it simply hits its mark too rarely'

(Brown, 2 Dec 2001). The *Mail on Sunday* is more positive; describing the piece as 'impressive' as well as 'witty and ingenious.' The reviewer notes that 'the murky depths of racism and sheer snobbery were explored' before urging the reader 'not to worry – it was a really jolly jape all the same' (Speirs, 25 Nov 2001). I was interested to note his presumption that readers would 'worry' about a show that explored such issues.

The List magazine printed two different reviews, one in the theatre section (by a young, straight man) and one in the gay section (by an older gay man who is also an established playwright). The former gave the piece a restrained review, describing it as 'strong and assured', 'witty and highly original' and 'unusual and thought-provoking' (Davies, 8 Aug 2002). A week later, the latter described the piece in much more positive terms as being one of the highlights of that year's Fringe, 'an ingenious, eccentric romp and a real tour de force' (Binnie, 22 Aug 2002).

For myself, the most interesting example of the differing readings of the piece came from the Scottish Arts Council. As is common, the piece was given an artistic evaluation at both The Arches and again at The Pleasance. At first outing, the assessor wrote, 'I loved this one man show that was an individual tour de force' before describing it as 'delightful', 'enchanting', 'fantastically wonderful' and so on (Scottish Arts Council, 23 Nov 2001). To my frustration, though, the piece was summed up as 'entertainment that was homage to a genre rather than thought-provoking and radical theatre.' Interestingly, the same assessor was sent to evaluate the piece again at the second outing and completely revised their view. They wrote that a familiarity with the piece allowed them to reflect more on its cerebral content, leading to the conclusion, 'I enjoyed this more as I was able to follow it more thus gave the impression of a highly intellectual piece' (Scottish Arts Council, 8 Aug 2002).

Overall, then, the piece had garnered a range of reactions. However, the perceived presence or absence of any intellectual content to the work was a

source of contention for some viewers. Whilst I had planned to make a piece that could be read in a variety of ways, I found myself disappointed (perhaps unreasonably) when that reaction characterised the work as being *solely* parodic/comedic and thus without claim to any intellectual value. I was particularly concerned that that my attempts at parodying cliché were simply read as clichés in themselves. Linda Hutcheon, in *A Theory of Parody* (1985), notes that parody relies on the repetition of another form in order to fulfil itself. However, it does so within a dominant discourse that only finds value in the supposedly 'original' and thus deems parody to lack artistic and cultural value. Thus, for *On The Edge* to repeat the clichés of the country house murder-mystery, even in the form of a critique, is regarded by many as being an artistic failure through its lack of putative originality. When I began working on *Through The Night* I decided to include this notion as an explicitly discursive theme, looking at the ways in which comedic and parodic work are regarded as lacking value, no matter how much intellectual content they might have.

Through The Night

One of my initial artistic intentions with *Through The Night* was to create a warmer, more poignant show than *On The Edge*, because, artistically, I had felt that the first show lacked emotion. Certainly, audience reactions reflected this as being a success and many people found the show very moving. Indeed, I was pleasantly surprised by how often audience members spoke to me about their strong emotional reactions and their deep attachment to Stella as a character. However, their focus tended to be almost entirely on *emotional* reactions to character and narrative and, once again, discussion of intellectual content was conspicuous by its absence.

As with all three of the pieces, there were conflicting reactions from people regarding degrees of clarity and obfuscation. Some audience members

accused the piece of lacking subtlety and being simplistic, whilst others felt that it was too complex and that the 'meaning' of the piece was too hidden. This was also reflected in press reactions. The show was reviewed twice by *The Scotsman*, once in the original version at The Arches and once at the Edinburgh Fringe. The original reviewer, Susan Mansfield, feels that the show lacked cultural depth. The review is titled 'A playful paddle in the shallow end of cultural complexities' and is mostly dismissive:

Leddy sets out to question stereotypes but ends up reinforcing them. The rich characters are flamboyant and shallow, and Stella's quest for self-knowledge brings answers as simplistic as the quest itself. [...] With a cultural review beginning, and controversy raging about the funding of high and low culture, there is no shortage of complex issues to engage with. Unfortunately, this show, polished as it is, simply slides around the edges (Mansfield, 22 May 2004)

In contrast, during the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Andrew Burnet's review in the same newspaper was mostly positive, describing the show as being 'beautiful' and 'hard to resist' (19 August, 2005) and giving it four stars. This led to a very interesting phenomenon. The positive review ensured that the show sold out that night, but where previous audiences had been warm and positive, this audience were markedly sullen and unresponsive. Later, when looking at the comments posted about the show on the EdFringe.com website, I found a series of very negative comments about the show, but only in the days *after* the Scotsman review had been published:

'Through The Nightmare'. Sorry not to be able to join in the sycophantic conspiracy but I found this show unfunny, uninteresting and frequently incomprehensible. (MacWilliam, Scotland - 20 August 2005)

I felt that David Leddy knew exactly what was going on but he failed to make it clear to the audience [...] My friends & the majority of the audience left that night feeling a bit unsure about it all- sorry. (Sanchia Longley, Doncaster - 23 August 2005)

Self-indulgent doesn't begin to describe this wilful waste of time and energy. [...] filled with confusion, trying to decide when he was in character, and which character, because the acting was so terrible [...] lacking punch, direction, insight, wit or artistry of any kind; (Rich Jarman, UK - 29 August 2005)

I am utterly astounded by the good reviews this piece got. Never before have I held the critics in such low regard[...] Pretentious to the extreme [...]there's this woman called Stella, whose accent changes throughout. We think he was attempting characters, but we're not sure. [...] Not sure what happened between

minute 34 and 45 because I was sleeping. [...] I have never seen such a pointless waste of space and time. I feel robbed. (Tim Groves, UK - 29 August 2005)

I was interested that such a gentle piece of theatre could elicit quite such violent reactions. Seemingly, these people were not so much horrified by the piece itself but by the fact that other people and critics *did* like the piece. At the same time, several demonstrate a clear anxiety that they may not be following my directed reading position.

As with the previous piece, the Scottish Arts Council assessed the show at both the original Glasgow presentation and again at the Edinburgh Fringe. Both assessors rated the piece as 'Excellent'. Assessor Judith Doherty, also the creative producer of theatre company *Gridiron*, wrote:

This production signalled one of the happiest hours I have spent in the theatre this year. It is beautifully, written, performed and designed. Cleverly directed and simply executed, *Through the Night*, achieves Leddy's wish to combine 'intellectual performance art with the playful pleasures of comedy and parody' while holding on to what seems to be his main aim, of entertaining, stimulating and titillating the audience. (Scottish Arts Council, 3 June 2004)

One reaction which I found particularly interesting in relation to this PhD was from *Mail On Sunday* reviewer Kenneth Speirs, who had given such a warm review to *On The Edge*. After giving a brief, positive, summary of the show, he devotes most of his review to the fact that I am doing a PhD. Whilst he makes it clear that he enjoyed the *results* of my research, he is fairly hostile to the idea that the work may have any claim to intellectual validity:

Just when you think you've had quite an enjoyable night watching an eccentrically camp show about pop songs [...] the whole thing is put off-kilter by the performer's write-up. In David Leddy's programme note on *Through The Night*, he goes and spoils it all by telling us that his show 'looks at Cinderella narratives in fairytales, opera, panto, and most of all in the generic rags-to-riches story.' Art as 'a form of class power' is also a theme, apparently. Well, I never. You have to wonder, though, if the normally playful and teasing Leddy is joking by coming up with academic clap-trap such as this. (Speirs, 23 May 2004)

In summary, reactions to *Through The Night* were slightly more extreme and more divided than reactions to the first show. Many audience members reacted with great emotional warmth to the piece, whilst others responded very aggressively to the levels of clarity and obfuscation. I was disappointed to find, again, that the difference between artistic form and content was one that people had difficulty differentiating. Even though I had *explicitly* discussed the battle between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture, the piece was still rarely regarded as having any intellectual depth.

In The Shade

The trend of high praise and severe criticism continued with *In The Shade*, which garnered the most divided opinion of all the three shows. Indeed, audience reactions most nights were separated between some viewers walking out at the interval and others cheering loudly during the curtain call. As previously, opinion on the artistic and intellectual worth of the pieces was divided. I remember one woman talking to me at length in the bar about how much she *loved* the show, *particularly* ‘because it wasn’t trying to be pretentious and clever’. At the same time, though, I did receive much face-to-face feedback regarding the piece’s discussion of race on a social and intellectual level.

The Scottish Arts Council assessment noted ‘a wide range of audience responses from overblown giggling to stony faced resistance. What would be expected from challenging work of this nature.’ They rated the show as being ‘good’ and summed up the show as ‘a performance that worked on many levels – as a narrative story but also an examination of the world of black divas and drag queens and an exploration of identity. This was genuinely interesting and very entertaining.’ (Scottish Arts Council, 21 June 05)

Press was divided. Kenneth Speirs of *The Mail on Sunday* gives a remarkably positive review considering the political stance of The Mail Group. He says, 'Leddy has come up with a corker this time', calling it my most challenging work to date and describing it as 'bitingly perceptive [...] a piece of theatre that expanded your horizons [...] funny, touching and very, very odd.' (Speirs, 22 May 2005). Similarly, Glasgow Herald, The Stage and Scotsgay magazine gave the piece broadly positive reviews.

In contrast, several other reviewers reject the piece out of hand. In *The Guardian*, Mark Fisher describes the show as a 'draining experience' which lacks artistic originality. However, he does feel that 'behind the clichés something else is going on' which is, possibly, 'some ill-focused theme about black culture'. He continues:

This is not pastiche, but neither is it clear what dark aspects Leddy is trying to unleash. [...] It's interesting that Leddy, as a white man, should take this on but I saw no evidence of the "mischievous comment" promised by his publicity about black styles being appropriated by the white mainstream. Leddy might equally be making any number of comments - if only his show didn't feel like it was performed in secret code. (Fisher, 1 June 2005)

On the other hand, Joyce McMillan, lead reviewer in *The Scotsman*, writes, 'I'd hesitate to say that a star is born in David Leddy's new solo show, but all the same, there's a feeling of being in at the start of something momentous' before going on to describe the piece as 'brave, messy and, at the moment, slightly overlong.' She ends the review with:

There's no mistaking the scale of what he is attempting here, or how close he and director Kate Nelson come to making it work. And when he finally smears himself with black face-paint at the end, to deliver a chilling version of Brecht and Weill's great song of implacable revolution, Pirate Jenny, there's a genuine five-star prickle down the spine; and a faint but definite sense of greatness in the making. (McMillan, 24 May 2005)

Interestingly, *The List* has a lot of trouble with the ways in which the piece differed from a straight narrative drama. The reviewer does feel that I was 'captivating' but also that my transformation from one character to another

was 'rather shaky' and that my psychic convulsions were 'unconvincing.' She goes on:

the narrative is interesting, but the loud, garrulous covers of soul hits kill the mood. The vulgarity and showiness certainly add another dimension theatrically, but ultimately get in the way of the message. Sometimes less is more. (Watson, 26 May 2005)

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Overall, then, reactions to the shows were mostly positive, but the intellectual content of the three pieces received a wide range of responses. Some people felt that the pieces were highly entertaining but little more. Others felt that there was clear intellectual complexity at the same time. Others felt the pieces to be neither of these things.

In examining the reactions to the pieces, I was struck by the degree to which these reactions were specific to the individual reader. Within the context of poststructuralist reception debate, it was interesting to see the great extent to which people's opinions of my work were a reflection of themselves and not a reflection of the shows. In practical terms I began to categorise the reactions into highbrow, middlebrow and lowbrow responses. Whilst these terms are intellectually questionable, I do believe that there is a useful kernel of knowledge within them. Were I writing a PhD focused on reception theory rather than creative practice, I would be keen to pursue these ideas in more depth. For the sake of argument, I would define the three categories as follows:

- High-brow - A deep theoretical knowledge of art (having studied it) or an extensive practical knowledge (having seen a large range of work). A self-consciously intellectual and interrogative approach to the reading of the work and usually a high level of knowledge of theatre and other art forms.
- Middle-brow - A casual interest in the arts, without any particular theoretical or practical framework or knowledge. Do not see an awful lot of art and what they do see tends to be fairly 'mainstream' such as narrative drama.

- Low-brow - Do not take an intellectual approach to the work at all and react in an immediate and intuitive way to the work. Often, but not always, they do not go to see much theatre.

In general terms, lowbrow people often enjoyed the pieces, finding them fun and entertaining, usually focusing on my perceived skill as a performer. Highbrow people often enjoyed the pieces too and would talk at length about the kind of intellectual ideas that I have discussed previously in the main body of this thesis. They often also said that it was refreshing for them to see work that managed to be enjoyable and entertaining at the same time as articulate and intelligent. In contrast, middlebrow people often found the pieces problematic. They rarely felt them to have any intellectual value and were sometimes disturbed that it may well be 'mere' entertainment. There was much consternation about the fact that, being parodic, the pieces were not 'original' and thus of little artistic value. These people often also showed fairly high levels of anxiety in how their assessment might differ from other people. They often seemed frightened that they may have 'missed the point.'

I had intended to make work which could be read in different ways by different people. In retrospect, though, I realised that my assumption had been that readers would be aware of that fact. The reality was quite the opposite. Only the most sophisticated and experienced of readers seemed to be aware of the ways in which the piece might be self-consciously employing different forms. The directed reading position of all of the pieces is predicated on the idea that the reader will, early on in the piece, start to see the gap between the form and content of the piece. They will see that in parodying the form, I am offering a political critique of it. In reality, though, this did not happen often and people sometimes reacted with great hostility to the idea of 'low' artistic forms being imbued with 'high' intellectual content. At the same time, I was concerned by the fact that my parodic repetition of clichés and my heavy use of intertextual reference were sometimes read as simply being a lack of 'originality' on my part.

Conclusion

The traditional model for concluding a PhD sits very uneasily with practice-based research of this kind. As Nelson (2005) points out, the rational scientific knowledge paradigm dominant in the academy 'habitually seeks to measure knowledge instrumentally in a notionally objective, linear model. A potentially falsifiable hypothesis is tested according to established research methodologies and 'new knowledge' outcomes are demonstrably proven (supposedly)' (2005, 1). I do not feel it is appropriate to discuss this research in terms of 'success' or 'failure', particularly when one does so in the shadow of poststructuralist thought, with 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity' being such contested terms. However, we cannot eschew these terms altogether, and a certain degree of 'objectivity' is possible when one judges both 'traditional' academic work and 'traditional' theatre, by which I mean scholarly and artistic works which follow an established paradigm. In these cases, it is possible to discern the degrees to which a work conforms to the rules of that paradigm. In dramatic new writing, for example, we know that the work should follow the model that Scribe established with the well-made play and in performance it should follow the psychological, realist example developed by Stanislavski.

In this work, however, I have combined a variety of different paradigms and moved back and forth between them. Thus I have both conformed to and broken the rules of all of these paradigms. It would be impossible to judge the 'success' or 'failure' of the work from any one of those models. I was certainly aware in the performing of the pieces that particular audiences members would often try to read the work purely as a piece of new writing (finding it too nonsensical, unoriginal and unrealistic) or as a piece of live art (finding it too traditional, entertaining and untransgressive) or as a piece of 'low' entertainment (finding it too complicated, pretentious and confusing). Readers with the ability and volition to combine different modes of knowledge have generally regarded the pieces as a success. On the other hand, I would

submit that it is readers who have tried to stick to the rules of only one paradigm who have found the work disappointing.

Indeed, the balance of those different knowledge paradigms has also overshadowed the writing of this thesis from beginning to end. It led to a suspicion on my part that practice-based research of art in the academy may always be a matter of fitting a square peg into a round hole. Where interesting art tends to be ambiguous and delicate in its communication, rigorous academic argument should be unequivocal and make its point as unassailably as possible. If an artist explains something clearly and succinctly then he is accused of lacking subtlety. If an academic explains something in an ambiguous and inconclusive way then he is accused of lacking rigour. I often found it challenging to marry these two opposing disciplines in this thesis and felt that, again, I had to simultaneously conform to and break the rules of both disciplines in order to discuss the work.

Whilst the marriage of these two disciplines was highly challenging, I do feel that some of the theories lend themselves particularly well to being used as creative tools. Judith Butler and Moe Meyer's theories, for example, take performance and performativity as their very basis and are especially well suited to artistic exploration in performance. As more specific example, I would cite the notion of LaToya as a Derridean 'woman' as being a highly successful imbrication of theory within practice. I was pleased with the way in which the generic characters of *On The Edge* successfully melded Baudrillard's theories of simulacra and simulation with notions of postmodern subjectivity and intertextuality within the framework of parodic comedy. I also feel that *Through The Night* effectively explored the postmodern notion of an implosion of 'art' and 'reality' through the ambiguous coalescence of putatively 'fictional' narrative in drama and 'factual' autobiography in live art.

One of the traditional aspects of the scientific knowledge paradigm that I do feel is applicable here is the delineation of possible future research. As this

research project finishes, the pieces I have created will remain in existence as professional pieces of work which I may continue to perform, depending on funding opportunities. The writing of this thesis has allowed me a clearer view of the ways in which I would continue to develop the shows in the future.

On The Edge

The principle change that I would make to *On The Edge* would be to approach the performance style in a different way. I would move away slightly from parody and incorporate more elements of dramatic acting. With each of the characters, I would perform some sections in a realist, dramatic style in order to heighten the artificiality that comes when they swap in and out of their more simulacral, parodic style. This would add another layer of complexity where the 'characters' are aware not only of their own constructedness, but also of their own ability to parody and mock that constructedness.

I am fairly satisfied with the structure of *On The Edge*, taken from the seven locked doors of *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*. However, I do feel that it creates too rhythmic a structure, which can border on the repetitive. The use of the 'blue interval' sections in the pieces went some way to alter and interrupt this structure, but I would like to take this further. Possibly, I would remove more of the Victorian criminology sections and replace them with some other abstract pieces that join together the performance vocabulary of the 'blue intervals' with the dance at the beginning of the show.

Through The Night

There are fewer changes that I would make here than to *On The Edge*. The most immediate would be a change to the opening of the show. Leaving the 'opening chat' intact, I would change the ritualised movement sequence that accompanies Mika Vainio's remix of Björk's *Headphones*. The original notion here was one of physical stillness and of allowing the rich sonorous quality of Mika Vainio's music to take centre stage. However, this seemed to come as

a shock to the audience after my amiable spoken introduction. I could often see them shifting in their seats and generally looking bemused. Whilst I do not have a problem with that per se, I do feel that the audience's mood was broken by the sharp change in performance style and regularly found that the positive mood did not return, at least not to the same degree. Thus, I would try to create a more seamless slide from one mood to another in order to maintain the light, positive reactions from the audience. On a practical level, I would aim to do this by making the segment shorter and less static, filling some of the time with slow, ritualised choreography that presages the 'crying score' later in the piece.

As I discussed earlier in this thesis, I would also return to the character of Kenny. Whilst I feel that Kenny is a warm and congenial character, I also feel that he represents too many unquestioned stereotypes about gay men and would like to draw those issues to the fore and disturb them more. I would like to balance out his stereotypically gay characteristics (fashion stylist, camp, mincing, admiration of diva-like singers) with more surprising characteristics. For example, he could find common ground with Stella by discussing a mutual love of horse racing.

In The Shade

This is the piece that I would make the most radical changes to in future performances. I would begin by editing the piece down to a much shorter length, aiming to turn it into a one-act piece of around an hour, matching the other two shows. I would also rewrite particular aspects of the narrative in order to give more clarity to the character of Reg. I would introduce Reg as a narrative character early on in the show, probably as the caretaker of LaToya's disused strip club. Later, I would give more explicit explanation of the fact that Delroy knows LaToya and Miss Gina are both roles played by Reg and also to clarify the idea that LaToya and Gina are battling for the control of Reg's body. The matter of quite who is to blame for Delroy's murder (LaToya, Reg or Miss Gina) would still be left ambiguous. Finally, I

would make clear that it is Miss Gina who wins that battle and goes on to sing *Pirate Jenny* at the end of the show.

Visually, I would change the layout of the staging to a proscenium arch. A set would be added to the piece, made from several hundred white t-shirts printed with a cut-out of LaToya's 'golliwog' face from the marketing materials. These would be hanging at different heights throughout the space, giving the opportunity for entrances and exits and places to hide props. More importantly, though, it would be used as a huge layered screen on to which images would be projected. Specifically, a series of photos would be shown that would depict the transformation from Reg to LaToya. These would be bleak, unforgiving photos drawing attention to five o'clock shadow, bloodshot eyes, bitten fingernails and so on. My aim here would be to visually introduce the character of Reg at the same time as mirroring the bleak emotional mood that is to come later in the show.

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As I have demonstrated, public reactions to this work were diverse and could be used to argue either way for the 'success' or the 'failure' of the research. One could submit that the directed reading positions I have mapped out in the pieces are by no means the 'meaning' of the work. Thus it would seem that the reader of this thesis will need to make their own decision on the successes and failures of the three pieces by combining a knowledge of the different artistic and intellectual paradigms and judging the skill with which I combine them in performance. I would assert that it is the reader's knowledge and ability to combine different artistic and intellectual modes of knowledge that are the key factors to the 'success' or 'failure' of the pieces.

I would certainly offer that this work represents a modest contribution to knowledge through the new ways it has combined those paradigms of cultural theory, dramatic new writing, live art and the specific 'low' entertainment forms of the murder-mystery, the Cinderella narrative, the drag

cabaret and the minstrel show. I suggest that it offers this contribution by way of artistic example rather than by way of a new performance paradigm. It should be stressed that the submission here is of practice and that the written thesis is intended to support and contextualise the practice, rather than vice versa. Thus, I regard the performances themselves as the most important part of the work that I submit here, rather than the written thesis.

To return to my original research proposal, I aimed to find ways in which one might combine cultural theory with specific populist performance forms. My conclusion is that you *can* combine cultural theory and populist forms, but audiences won't necessarily notice that you have done so. One could argue that this denotes failure on my part as I was unable to draw audiences into seeing beyond the culturally ascribed values of the particular genres I was using. On the other hand, one could regard this as a mark of the success of the project, in the fact that I have managed to combine cultural theory and populist forms with such a high level of suture that mainstream audiences rarely felt uncomfortable and did not reject the work out of hand. Personally, I have sympathy for both of those views.

Overall, then, I would conclude that whilst it is possible to combine cultural theory with populist artforms, only a small number of viewers are likely to realise that this is the case. Whilst this reaction from audiences was initially a cause for concern to me, I later came to accept it and I would now argue that this demonstrates the degree to which I have effectively created polysemous performance texts which can be read in different ways by viewers from a wide variety of backgrounds.

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Appendices

Footnoted Playscripts:

On The Edge

Through The Night

In The Shade

ON THE EDGE

David Leddy

**first performed Nov 2002
at The Arches, Glasgow**

**This version first performed Aug 2003
At Pleasance, Edinburgh Fringe**

LX – HOUSELIGHTS

CD – TRACK ONE, PROGRAMMED ON REPEAT

[3 ENERGETIC JAZZ NUMBERS –STEVE LAWRENCE’S VERSION OF *I’VE GOT YOU UNDER MY SKIN*, COUNT BASIE’S *JUMPIN’*]

EMPTY SPACE. PROJECTION SCREEN U.S.C FOR SLIDES,
DAVID WANDERS CHEERFULLY AROUND SPACE AS AUDIENCE COME
IN. HE DRAWS CHALK OUTLINES ROUND PROPS ON FLOOR D.S.C.
THERE IS A CANDLESTICK WITH FIVE CANDLES, LEAD PIPE, ROPE,
BOTTLE OF POISON, DAGGER, TOP HAT AND BANANA WITH THE
OUTLINE OF A GUN AROUND IT¹. HE GREETES AUDIENCE MEMBERS
JAUNTILY AS THEY SIT DOWN. HE ASKS A FEMALE AUDIENCE
MEMBER TO LAY ON FLOOR TO BE DRAWN AROUND AS A DEAD BODY
THEN LETS HER GO BACK TO HER SEAT.

CD – FADE-OUT TRACK ONE [JAZZ].

LX – HOUSE LIGHTS DOWN TO BO

CD – SHORT BURST OF STRING QUARTET IN DARKNESS², WHICH
LEADS INTO... TRACK TWO³ [GIDDY, SLIGHTLY COMIC JAZZ - 3 MINS]

LX – QUICK FADE UP TO COVER ON WHOLE SPACE.

DAVID (THE DOCTOR) PERFORMS A COMIC JIG TO THE DANCE,
INTRODUCING THE IRONIC, FARCICAL STYLE OF THE PIECE

CD – [DANCE JAZZ] ENDS

¹ Referencing the counters from the game Cluedo.

² Arvo Pärt 1994. All of the string music used in the piece is taken from here.

³ *Copenhagen* by Ambrose and His Orchestra, on 1986 OST CD of *The Singing Detective*, but strangely was never actually used in the series.

THE DOCTOR STANDS USC. HE SPEAKS WITH ALMOST MELODRAMATIC, COMICAL EXCESS.

So there he was!... A silhouette in the doorway of my run-down, ramshackle country seat. The golden light from the entrance hall was behind him, giving a rather *dramatic* effect to his entrance here in the first reel. As usual in these films it was a dark, dismal, sinister and stormy night. A sudden flash of lightning illuminated his face. It was... The Inspector!

SLIDE – THE INSPECTOR ⁴

[PAINTING OF MAN WITH GLASSES]

As he saw me approach he removed his police-issue Trilby and intoned. “I’m so terribly, terribly, *terribly* sorry to hear the *tragic* news.”

WALKS TO DSC

Ladies and Gentlemen, you must think me so terribly, terribly, *terribly* rude.
[pause as he smirks at audience] I am your narrator for the evening. I am...
The Doctor! [HE GLANCES TOWARDS THE PROJECTION]

SLIDE –THE DOCTOR ⁵

[DOCTOR IN WHITE COAT WITH TEST TUBE]

⁴ Tamara de Lempicka’s portrait of unknown man

⁵ Tamara de Lempicka’s portrait of Doctor Boucard, 1929

It will be my task this evening to lead you through the details of this terrible, dastardly, pusillanimous crime. Ladies and gentleman, you are about to cross the threshold of *murder*... Wipe your feet.

For a little background “info”, this grand house is my very own ramshackle country seat out in the sleepy slopey countryside of Chipping Cleghorn. As I’m sure you know, this is a village rich in unmarried ladies of a certain age and retired military personnel.⁶ Who would have believed that such a dreadful, dire and dastardly crime could happen here? Who can be trusted in these kinds of films? One could turn around to find ones own kith and kin with a dagger. A Charleston-dancing flapper in the hall with a revolver! (HORRIFIED) A psychotic golfing lesbian in the library with the lead piping!!⁷

But I digress. There he was, The Inspector, standing in dramatic relief against the impressive, *antique*, carved-wood-panelling of my entrance hall. “There’s a melancholy in this house,” he said. “It’s impregnated somehow with sorrow. A sorrow that can’t be dispersed since it’s penetrated so [LOWERS VOICE] deep.⁸ The walls are weeping.⁹” He turned to face me “It must be a terrible, terrible, *terrible* shock to you, Doctor” he said. I stared for a moment and then it dawned on me what he meant. For a second I had quite forgotten. You see, the deceased, the murderess... is my wife... Judith.¹⁰

I began by taking the Inspector on a tour of my magnificently impressive period-drama-style country estate.

⁶ A village and the following sentence are taken directly from Christie’s *Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926)

⁷ Another allusion to the murder-mystery board game *Cluedo*.

⁸ Quote from Miss Marple in *At Bertram’s Hotel* (1965)

⁹ Quote from Bartok’s *Duke Bluebeard’s Castle* (1911)

¹⁰ The name of Bluebeard’s ill-fated bride in *Duke Bluebeard’s Castle* (Bartok, 1911)

SLIDE – COUNTRY HOUSE EXTERIOR

That way, he could get his bearings and the audience could marvel at the fashionable chinoiserie. To those that don't know, 'fashionable chinoiserie' means chinky stuff. Whilst I did so, I explained the plot so far:

STARTS WALKING FARCICALLY ON THE SPOT, TURNING CORNERS TO EMPHASISE PARTICULAR PHRASES, OPENING AND CLOSING DOORS IN THE STYLE OF A PARTICULARLY POOR MIME ARTIST.

I was with Judith at 8pm. She seemed tense, edgy, neurotic. She explained to me that somebody had been *blackmailing* her. Needless to say, I was shocked. Judith! My wife of only two years! What kind of skeleton could she possibly have in her closet? I remember she glanced again and again and again at the window – as if she expected somebody to jump through it at any moment. I walked across and closed the window, locked it, and drew the heavy curtains across so that no villain could espy us from the outside of the house.¹¹

She said to me "I've had enough of this, I have here a letter to my blackmailer which I shall put into their grubby, mucky, grimy little hands. It tells them that I will no longer be held to ransom. *Tell the world, tell the world*, I say. Throw caution to the wind. I shall be held to ransom no longer."

"But, darling Judith," I asked, "*who is your blackmailer?*"

¹¹ Allusion to the narrative of *Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (Christie, 1926)

“My dear,” she said in a low voice laden with more than a hint of mystery, “They look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it.”¹² [THE DOCTOR SHRUGS AS IF HE HAS NO IDEA WHAT JUDITH IS GOING ON ABOUT] “However, Darling, I cannot reveal their identity at this juncture, other than to say... *it is someone within the walls of our very own ramshackle country seat!*”

At that moment the telephone jangled like billy-o. [BADLY MIMES ANSWERING TELEPHONE] It was the Maid, telling me that I was to be called away immediately on a house visit in the village to see to Old Tom’s bunions. Old Tom is a comic, country-bumpkin-commoner type of character who is not very important to the plot. As I left the house, though, I bumped into a mysterious man at the front gate. His collar was turned up and the brim of his hat was turned down, so I couldn’t get a good look at his face. He asked me the time and I noticed from his voice that he was foreign. Very suspicious.¹³

Anyway, I returned from performing Old Tom’s bunionectomy at 10.05 in the pm. I called the Maid.

SLIDE – THE MAID¹⁴

[YOUNG WOMAN, PINK DRESS, LAYING DOWN]

I asked the Maid if she would go to the library to fetch Judith. She returned moments later, telling me that the door was most firmly locked. How strange, I thought, and followed the Maid to the library door. It was indeed most firmly locked – from the inside. We called to Judith (Judith, Judith!), to no response. I

¹² Quote from Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. Lady Macbeth, *Act I, sc v*

¹³ Quote from Christie’s *Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926)

¹⁴ Tamara de Lempicka’s portrait of Mlle. Boucard

was anxious now, and tried to force the door open, but I was too weak. I called the Butler into the scene

SLIDE – THE BUTLER ¹⁵

[MAN IN DARK SUIT, WEARING RING]

We both tried ramming the door, all the while calling out to my wife (Judith, Judith!!) No luck. Hearing the commotion, my brother-in-law, the Major came into the scene

SLIDE – THE MAJOR ¹⁶

[MAN IN RED UNIFORM]

He was greatly concerned to hear what all the fuss was about. Coming straight behind was The Bright Young Thing

SLIDE – BRIGHT YOUNG THING ¹⁷

[WOMAN DRIVING GREEN CAR]

Followed by that rather suspicious looking Foreigner I had met at the front gate.

SLIDE – THE FOREIGNER ¹⁸

[MAN IN LONG BLACK COAT]

Last entering the frame was my sister-in-law, the Spinster

¹⁵ Tamara de Lempicka's portrait of Marquis Sommi, 1925

¹⁶ Tamara de Lempicka's portrait of S.A.I. Le Grand Duc Gabriel, 1927

¹⁷ Tamara de Lempicka's self-portrait in the green Bugatti, 1925

¹⁸ Tamara de Lempicka's 'portrait of a man, incomplete' (though the model was actually her estranged first husband Tadeusz de Lempicka) 1928

SLIDE – THE SPINSTER ¹⁹

[LESBIAN IN BLACK BOOTS]

Together we managed to force the door open and in the middle of the library floor...

**LX – SNAP TO RED LIGHTING STATE [OR SINGLE RED LIGHT AT BACK
SPLASHING ONTO SHOULDERS AND ACROSS OUTLINE OF BODY**

... was Judith.

SLIDE – JUDITH ²⁰

[NUDE WOMAN LAYING ON BACK]

There was a knife. She had been stabbed between the brrrreasts. *Dead*. The key was still there in the lock, on the inside, but the window – which I had locked not an hour before - was open wide, with curtains billowing.²¹ I shut the window while the Major took Judith's pulse. "She's dead." I could hardly believe it. [THOUGHTFULLY] As they say in *Romeo and Juliet* "Death had sucked the honey of her breath, but had no power yet upon her beauty."²² Or maybe *Macbeth*... "Her bones are marrowless, her blood is cold. There is no speculation in those eyes that she doth glare with." ²³

¹⁹ Tamara de Lempicka's portrait of The Duchess De La Salle, 1925

²⁰ Tamara de Lempicka's painting of Beautiful Rafaella, 1927

²¹ Again, a reference to the murder narrative from *Christie*, 1926.

²² Introducing Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (Act v, sc iii) which is only returned to in the very final scene of the play.

²³ The first of a series of quotations from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* which reference blood. Spoken by Macbeth himself (Act III, sc iv)

The Maid screamed and fainted. The Butler dashed to her assistance. Meanwhile the Major and the Foreigner backed away in horror. The Spinster held the Bright Young Thing in her arms and the Bright Young Thing moaned “who would have thought the old gal to have so much blood in her?!?”²⁴

At exactly 10.10 in post meridian, Judith Duncan was pronounced dead.

LX – RED LIGHT FADES AWAY TO RETURN TO GENERAL COVER

As I told him all this, the Inspector looked at me intently. “Can you think of any reason at all that somebody would want Judith dead?”

DOCTOR PICKS UP THE BANANA/GUN AND STARTS TO EAT IT

None, I replied. She was loved and adored by all. Unless – now here’s something – it was that dastardly blackmailer! “Well, yes, that is an option” said the Inspector, “but, was your wife a wealthy woman?” Now that you come to mention it, I said, she was a very wealthy woman. Do you think money could be the motive?

I should explain at this point that Judith and I had both been married before and that, in fact, her previous marriage was the source of her wealth. She had been married to a super-super-wealthy American industrialist who mysteriously dropped dead one day a few years ago. Judith inherited the lot. She was, as the French say “un femme tres, tres, tres wealthée”. My money, on the other hand, is old money. My family has lived in this majestically impressive period-drama ramshackle country seat for centuries. So, before we married, Judith and I sat down and talked money. It turned out that our two

²⁴ Lady Macbeth (Act V, sc iv)

fortunes were of practically the same size, so we agreed to sign a contract. Neither of us could spend, inherit, or otherwise get access to the money of the other. We were both more than happy about this.

“So, Doctor,” the Inspector was thinking aloud. “You are the only person in the house without a motive and also the only person in the house with an alibi!” How strange, I said, to think of Old Tom’s bunions as one’s alibi, but yes, that’s true. I am the only person in the house without a motive and with an alibi.

He turned to me and looked me straight in the eye. “I will need your help, Doctor. You are the only person above suspicion and I need you to act as my expert on the ground. You will assist me in my investigations by taking notes in painstaking detail and also filling me in with background information about the suspects. No stone should be left unturned.”

I will gladly help solve the mystery of my wife’s murder by playing your right-hand-man, Inspector. Watson to your Holmes.²⁵ Hastings to your Poirot.²⁶ Macduff to your Malcolm. I will be bold, bloody and resolute.²⁷

“I notice, Doctor, that in this tour of the house you are giving me, there are some doors which remain locked. You *must* open them for me.”²⁸

But Inspector, those are my most private of rooms. Sacred personal space, if you will. Surely they cannot be important in the investigation?

²⁵ Dr Watson, assistant to detective Sherlock Holmes in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s eponymous stories. (eg, Conan Doyle, 1905)

²⁶ Poirot’s trusty assistant and ‘longtime companion’ (Christie, 1926 and others)

²⁷ Second Apparition in *Macbeth* (Act IV, sc i)

²⁸ Bartok’s opera *Duke Bluebeard’s Castle* (1911) follows Judith and Bluebeard as they open the seven locked doors of his castle.

“No stone unturned, Doctor, no stone unturned.”

You are right, I said. I shall show you each of my locked rooms. No stone unturned, Inspector. All will be revealed, nothing concealed. As we strode on through the house, I said to the Inspector “I fear that we shall draw a blank. The door had been locked from the inside and the locked window was then left open. “And unfortunately,” said the Inspector, there are no fingerprints on the dagger.” The murderer must have worn gloves. That means that the murder must have been committed by one of the people who were in the house whilst I was out in the village seeing to the bunions of Old Tom. But I have known these people for many, many years. I cannot believe that any of them would have something to hide.

The Inspector stopped in his tracks and turned to me. “Everyone in these stories has something to hide. Remember that.”²⁹

We turned a corner, I turned a key. The Inspector seemed slightly taken aback. No doubt it was my “collection”. You see, the first of the rooms is my Doctor’s surgery.³⁰

I collect interesting antique medical equipment. It fascinates me to see the imperfections of science’s past. These terrible instruments for probing and slicing the body. I was expedient in making it crystale-clear to the Inspector that my collection was for observation only. These horrrrific objects would never be put to use in my modern line of work!

²⁹ Quote from Poirot in *Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (Christie, 1926)

³⁰ The first of Bluebeard’s locked rooms is the torture chamber (Bartok, 1911).

He had already presumed that, he told me, and moved on to my bookshelf. Now here was a matter of much more interest. My criminology books. I must confess to being something of an amateur sleuth, and this is why I am thrilled to the marrow to be able to assist the Inspector. You see, for years now I have avidly read books on “the nature of the criminal.” It captivates me, the notion that scientists are able to scientifically apply their science so as to piece together the psyche, and indeed the very scientific appearance, of many different types of criminal. I was certain that I would be able to bring my knowledge of this science to bear on the case. No sooner had I mentioned this, than our first suspect arrived.

SLIDE – THE SPINSTER ³¹

[LESBIAN WITH BLACK BOOTS

THE DOCTOR STARTS TO WALK IN A LARGE SEMI-CIRCLE TO USC.

Uninvited, The Spinster stalked into the room in her usual mannish garb. Her hair was slicked back with pomade and her gait was that of an arrogant gentleman golfer. One would expect to see her in an expensive women-only nightclub, or at a lorry-driver’s pull-up. Immediately I drew reference to the criminological work of one Henry Havelock Ellis.³² He describes the ominous, clouded and perilous mindset of these inverted creatures, these half-women, but more of that later...

PLAYING THE SPINSTER, HE STALKS FROM USC TO DSC, BOOMING IN A HUSKY AMERICAN ACCENT.

³¹ As before, Tamara de Lempicka’s portrait of Duchess De La Salle, 1925

³² The first of a series of references to Victorian criminology. Havelock Ellis (1889) as cited in Kemp (2000)

SPINSTER: Oh Jesus-god-damn, Inspector. Why have I been summoned here to this loathsome surgery, this damn torture chamber?³³ Why do I have to suffer this? Being questioned by you? A man! Looking at me with those eyes, those brown eyes, amongst all this cold medical metal, all these screws and devices designed to penalise, to punish women's bodies. God damn you, Inspector.

For the drama to start a woman must die, that's what they say. [PAUSE] The last time I saw Judith was at 9.30pm, around fifteen minutes after the Doctor left the house. I went in to see her for a chat. You can ask the Maid, she saw me leaving the room. [PAUSE] So, we can work out that Judith must have been stabbed between the breasts after 9.30 and before 10.05 when we burst in and found her silver skin laced with golden blood, her gashed stabs like a breach in nature for ruin's wasteful entrance.³⁴ [PAUSE, OFF-HAND] It's a terrible tragedy.

I suppose you want some background? A short introduction as to who I am, [PAUSE] how I fit into the plot? The twilight, [PAUSE] mysterious, [PAUSE] ambiguous world which is my natural habitat?

[TO AUDIENCE] Well, you have all met me before, I'm sure of that. I usually wear golfing tweeds and have a mannish gait. My animosity towards the opposite sex: legendary. Think Virginia Woolf.... and Vita Sackville-West. Think Gertrude Stein.... and Alice B Toklas. Think Marlene, aaaaaaaaaaah Marlene, In the third reel of *Morocco*, 1930, where she plays a cabaret-artiste in her well-cut gentleman's tuxedo. She throws her rose into the crowd and then, to the surprise of all... kisses a woman.³⁵

³³ She gives the room the same title as in *Duke Bluebeards Castle* (Bartok, 1911)

³⁴ Macbeth in Act II, sc iii

³⁵ Von Sternberg, 1930

For myself, a favourite role was in Alfred Hitchcock's 1940 film of the Du Maurier novel *Rebecca*.³⁶ I was present in the role of the hostile housekeeper Mrs Danvers. In the novel she was one dim and dreary dame, let me tell you.³⁷ So Mr Hitchcock bought me in to stick a little spice up Mrs Danvers. I loved playing the scene where I said [ENGLISH ACCENT] "everything is just as it was the day that Rebecca died. [PAUSE] This is the wardrobe where I keep her old clothes. [PAUSE] This is where I keep her underwear..." [MIMES STROKING UNDERWEAR TO CHEEK] [AMERICAN ACCENT] Of course, the censors would never allow us to say anything openly, but we made the point clear enough.³⁸ And here I am again, in this picture. Right up-front in the second reel, with the key light at 90 degrees for the close shot to emphasise my boyish bone structure.

As for this case, I shall explain everything to you clearly and succinctly, Inspector. Judith, the dead woman, was my sister-in-law. Not from her marriage to The Doctor, obviously. Her previous husband – the wealthy American industrialist who died so unexpectedly – [PAUSE] he was my big brother. I miss him, you know [PAUSE] I miss him still, [PAUSE] every damned day.

After his death Judith, like myself, was bereft. Grief consumed us both and in the face of it we offered each other sisterly support. I know what you are thinking, not that kind of sisterly support. God, Judith was hardly that kind of woman even if I had been interested, which I was not. No no, we became bosom buddies. We travelled everywhere together and so when the time

³⁶ Hitchcock, 1940

³⁷ Referring to Daphne Du Maurier's original novel (1938) on which Hitchcock's film is based.

³⁸ Drawing reference here to Vito Russo's book *The Celluloid Closet* (1981), as well as Epstein and Friedman's film of the same name (1996)

came for Judith's second marriage – [ICILY] to the Doctor here – she asked me to up roots and move here to rainy old, leafy old, mysterious old England. I cannot say that the Doctor really made me welcome, but my presence was at least tolerated.

Little did I realise quite the culture shock that I had in store. You'll understand that my sapphic mode of dress is *de rigueur* in downtown Manhattan, but in rainy old, leafy old, mysterious old Chipping Cleghorn, on the outskirts of Woking, it's quite a different matter. Meeting women with whom I [COUGH] have common interests... was pretty difficult, that is to say impossible.

LX – SNAP TO DARK BLUE STATE

CD – SHORT BURST OF ARVO PART STRING MUSIC

WALKS ABOUT THE SPACE THOUGHTFULLY AS IF AT WORK,

SMOOTHING DOWN CLOTHES AND DUSTING FURNITURE WITH HANKY,

SUDDENLY STOPS AND PUTS HAND TO FOREHEAD. THEN PULLS

HIMSELF TOGETHER AND CARRIES ON.

MUSIC ENDS, CD OFF

LX – SNAP BACK TO GENERAL COVER

And so I got lonely. Terribly lonely, actually. Here I was in a foreign land, treated like a freak by everybody. I was missing my brother something awful. I was on the edge, Inspector, I really was. On the edge in every sense of the word. I was on the fringes of everybody else's lives, looking in to the centre. I was quite, quite desperate.³⁹

But I digress, I came here intending to give information pertinent to the case... to Judith's death. And I will.

³⁹ Each of the suspects uses the phrase 'on the edge' at some point in their scene.

A short time ago, Inspector, a letter plopped onto my doormat. It was not a hand-written letter, no. The characters of each word were cut from the pages of a newspaper [SHE WALKS D.S. AND PICKS UP THE LETTER]. A poison-pen letter, I believe it is called. This particular letter imparts news of a most distressing nature. It told me that my dear, dear brother had *not* died in a mysterious accident, no no. He had been murdered by the administration of a deadly South-American poison which cannot be detected by modern medicine!

DOCTOR: “How contemptible,” said the Inspector, thoughtfully.

SPINSTER: That’s not even the half of it, Inspector. By whose hand? Who poisoned my brother? Judith! Yes, ladies... and gentlemen, Judith was a cold-blooded murderess! She killed her own husband, my own brother. I confronted her at first despatch. “It’s true,” she responded icily. “I killed him, and what’s more I don’t regret it for moment. He was a cad, a humbug and a brute.”

It also turned out that our close sisterly bond was all an act. She had never even liked me! She said that my brother’s death had left all his wealth to her, but with a clause in his will saying that I must be taken care of. I felt doubly betrayed. My brother may have been a cad, a humbug and a brute... but he loved me. He knew that I was on the edge of things looking in and he wanted to make sure that I wasn’t left stranded in the cold. But Judith? Judith couldn’t give a shit!

SHE TURNS DECISIVELY UPSTAGE, ON TURNING BACK HE IS THE DOCTOR AGAIN

DOCTOR [FAST, EXCITED PACE]: As soon as she stalked out of my surgery, I started to summarise the notes that I had made for The Inspector. We had a motive! A cast-iron motive. The Spinster wanted revenge against Judith for the murder of her brother and the betrayal of their friendship. Isolated, without the structure of a social support network, she had lost sight of right and wrong and committed murder!

SLIDE – FRANCIS GALTON, 6 MOUNTED PORTRAITS OF BETHLEM
[6 BROWN PHOTOS OF CRAZY MEN]⁴⁰

What's more, I added, if we refer to the work of Henry Havelock-Ellis, he draws a clear link between this kind of sexually-inverted half-woman and the psychotic mind.⁴¹ Just look at the evidence all around us, I said... June Allyson as the psychotic lesbian killer in the 1972 film masterpiece *They Only Kill Their Masters*. Elizabeth Ashley as the psychotic lesbian killer in *Windows*.⁴² Sharon Stone as the psychotic bisexual killer in *Basic Instinct*. [knowledgeably] This phenomenon is everywhere.

SLIDE – GUNS
[CLOSE-UP OF TWO OLD-FASHIONED PISTOLS]

[AS IF INTERRUPTED BY THE SLIDE] My Armoury⁴³, a collection of antique weapons, guns mostly. I inherited it from my father and I keep it under lock and key to avoid mishaps. Some of these weapons still work, you know... You could kill a man in this room.

⁴⁰ As cited in Kemp (2000)

⁴¹ Havelock Ellis (1889) as cited in Kemp (2000)

⁴² Both references taken from Russo (1981)

⁴³ The second of Bluebeard's locked doors (Bartok, 1911)

CD – DIRGE LIKE, FUNEREAL MUSIC. WHICH LASTS JUST A COUPLE OF SECONDS.⁴⁴

The Major was Judith's only brother and when he arrived, I have to say that the poor old chap was in rather a sorry state.

SLIDE- THE MAJOR⁴⁵

[OLD MAN IN RED UNIFORM]

LX – FADE TO SMALL CIRCLE OF LIGHT CS FROM LAMPSHADE

THE MAJOR [walking with exaggerated limp, SPEAKING WITH GRAVELLY, DODDERY VOICE]: I've been waiting. I feel awful, as if I've been punched. I don't know where to start. The money? The girl? No, no not the girl. It all seems to be linked together and I don't know how to unravel it. What must you think of me? What must you think? I can't even string a sentence together. Where shall I begin? The girl, no not the girl. The money? The chair? Judith?

DOCTOR: The Inspector took charge of the situation in his cool, authoritative manner,. "You're talking about a chair, Major. Can you tell me a bit more about that?"

MAJOR: What? Why the chair? Why?

HE LUMBERS A BIG HEAVY ARMCHAIR INTO HIS LIGHT

⁴⁴ Taken from Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* (1913)

⁴⁵ As before, Tamara de Lempicka's portrait of S.A.I. Le Grand Duc Gabriel, 1927

When I came in to the room, the room where we found Judith, a chair had been pulled out into the middle of the room. A big, heavy armchair with a high back. Why would anyone want it there? Move it to the slap-bang centre of the room, between the door and the window?⁴⁶

DOCTOR: The Inspector was writing all this down. Most curious. Why would the position of a chair be important?

MAJOR FLOPS DOWN INTO CHAIR

MAJOR: Where was I? I've seen many corpses in my time, Inspector. Blood's been shed before now, in the olden times.⁴⁷ But never my own sister, you see. There's so much to say, but it's all in a jumble. The girl, the chair, the money.

DOCTOR: "Tell us a little bit about this girl, Major," coaxed the inspector with all the intricate skill of a surgeon. "I don't know who you're talking about, Major. Which girl?"

MAJOR: The girl? Oh that poor girl. Judith's daughter, my niece, the Bright Young Thing. How will she ever cope? The death of her own dear mama? Born with a silver spoon and all that, but no silver spoon will help her now. I want to comfort her, but she won't let me near her. She won't even speak a word to me. She won't talk to me ever since...

What was I telling you about? The money, of course. I just couldn't pay it back. Judith needed it too quickly. I got angry and I argued with Judith. I'm sorry Judith. I got angry. They were just crossed words, though, not bad blood. Why

⁴⁶ As we see later, the chair is of vital importance in the mechanics of the murder narrative taken from Christie, 1926.

⁴⁷ Macbeth in Act III, sc iv

did you have to leave us? Now it's too late for me to say sorry because she's gone. Judith's gone and she'll never be back.

And now that Bright Young Thing won't talk to me. I feel such regret. I was drunk. I was drunk and elated, built up by that Bright Young Thing. Elated. And I wanted her. I know I shouldn't have, but I wanted her. I wanted to just touch her. Feel her hand on the back of my neck just for a moment. She's my niece, of course, and normally I would have done everything by the book, but not that night.

[LONG PAUSE]

DOCTOR: "Major?" The Inspector is there again, with a soothing, honeyed tone of voice.

MAJOR: Judith lent me a sum of money. A large sum of money. Later she wanted it back suddenly. Within a week, she said, for a business venture, I think. Yes, yes, a business venture. But I had spent all the money. We argued. We fell out. Brother and sister fell out over something as sordid as money. And now it's too late to say sorry. Too late to say goodbye, even. All so sordid. But where was I?

DOCTOR: "Money," said the Inspector, "you were talking about money, Major."

MAJOR: I so want to say sorry, but it is just too late. We didn't speak for weeks. And now suddenly this, Judith stabbed between the breasts. Her only mother dead. My only sister dead. Here's the smell of blood still: all the

perfumes in Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.⁴⁸ It was only money Judith. I'm so sorry. Oh, Inspector, what do you need to know? Do you have any questions?

DOCTOR: The Inspector said "Just one, Major. When was the last time you saw Judith alive?"

MAJOR: Oh, I can tell you that exactly. 9.55pm. I'm a creature of habit, Inspector. Every evening I take a walk on the veranda at 9.30 where I enjoy a cigar. I walked up and down, up and down and all the while I could hear Judith's voice coming from inside the room. No distinct words, but definitely Judith talking to somebody. There was one point where she raised her voice, as if she was arguing. "There are enough drains on my money as it is," she said. That's all I heard, though. I left the veranda at 9.55 so as to catch a broadcast on the wireless at 10. I could still hear Judith's voice as I left the veranda. She must have been killed in the ten minutes between me leaving the veranda and the Doctor coming home. That's all I know, I'm afraid.

DOCTOR: "Don't worry Major," the Inspector said reassuringly, "you've told me everything I need to know. The information about the chair in the middle of the room could prove very valuable indeed. Good night."

LX - CROSS FADE BACK TO GENERAL COVER

I must say that I was terrifically impressed by the way The Inspector handled the situation. Who would have expected a man of the law to have such sensitivity?

⁴⁸ Quote from Lady Macbeth's most famous speech (Act V, sc i)

“Why could the chair being in the middle of the room be so important?” I asked. “Anything out of the ordinary is of prime importance,” the Inspector told me. “Of course,” I apologised, “I wasn’t thinking.” The Inspector replied cheekily, “luckily for everybody, I’m here and I’m thinking.” ⁴⁹

Needless to say, though, nobody is above suspicion, not even the poor old Major.

SLIDE – GALTON, CUT-OUTS OF CAMBRIDGE BOATING PARTY
[BLACK BACKGROUND, SMALL CUT-OUT PHOTOS OF FACES] ⁵⁰

Cesare Lombroso has some very interesting theories about those that get tattoos. ⁵¹

DOCTOR LUMBERS CHAIR AWAY FROM CS

I’m told that many army men came back with tattoos from Mandalay and such places in the Orient and I wonder if The Major is one of them. Cesare Lombroso says it is a sign of primal instincts. That’s not to mention the Major’s large unpaid debt to the murdered woman. That’s a very serious matter indeed and certainly a viable motive... for murder.

Now, we needed to have little chat with Judith’s daughter, the Bright Young Thing and I knew exactly where to find her. Judith’s dressing room.

SLIDE – JUDITH’S BEDROOM AND DRESSING ROOM

⁴⁹ A wild card intertextual reference. Spoken by Madonna in Seidelman’s *Desperately Seeking Susan* (1985). Remarkably, quite a few people spotted this.

⁵⁰ As cited in Kemp (2000)

⁵¹ Lombroso (1895) as cited in Kemp (2000)

[OPULENT BEDROOM, WITH DOOR OPEN TO DRESSING ROOM]

I usually keep the room locked because of all the valuable jewels that were kept in there. A king's ransom in gold and silver: clear, cold diamonds and blood red rubies.⁵²

CD – GIDDY JAZZ, COUNT BASIE

**DAVID PUTS ON SUNGLASSES AND WRAPS WHITE SCARF AROUND
HEAD TO BECOME THE BRIGHT YOUNG THING.**

BRIGHT YOUNG THING [SUPER-PLUMMY, SUPER-NASAL VOICE]: Oh, *really*, Inspector!!!

SLIDE – THE BRIGHT YOUNG THING⁵³

[WOMAN IN GREEN CAR]

CD – MUSIC FADES TO LOWER LEVEL AND PLAYS UNDER

It's just too much. You are a *hoot*. I didn't know you would be in here, in my mother's dressing room. I often used to come in here when I was a child. I would watch her tart herself up for a social function and choose from her jewels. A treasury of jewels.⁵⁴ She ignored me, of course. She always did, but I used to enjoy watching nonetheless.

Anyway, Inspector, you are a deranged old luna-lunatic. Even the idea of it, killing my own mother!! Why on earth?... Well, there's the inheritance, of course. One could live comfortably on the money from these jewels alone.

⁵² Duke Bluebeard's third locked room – The Treasury (Bartok, 1911)

⁵³ As before, Tamara de Lempicka's self portrait, 1925

⁵⁴ She uses the 'proper' name from the Bartok libretto.

But who needs an inheritance when you've got a face like mine! ... I know, darling, the world is so envious – but I just lock eyes with them and say squarely...

CD – MUSIC PAUSES

“you are jealous of my face!” They can never meet my aloof stare.

CD – MUSIC STARTS AGAIN

So, with this kind of incandescent beauty, Inspector, I hardly need murder my mother. I can always marry for money.

I wasn't shocked, you know, by seeing her dead body. The sleeping and the dead are but as pictures.⁵⁵ It was like that, as if she was a painting. Copied from somewhere else, a copy of a copy⁵⁶, like a forged painting. It's the eye of childhood that fears a painted devil⁵⁷, and I'm not a child anymore, Inspector. [LICKS HER LIPS “SEDUCTIVELY”, TO COMIC EFFECT]

But, that's not to say that I wouldn't have cheerfully strangled my mother. I would have derived great, great pleasure from it. I should love to have bumped her off, Inspector, but as it happens I did not. I was too busy dancing the black bottom like a frenzied whirligig and swinging my beads like any other bright young thing of the jazz era. There was no love lost between my mother and myself. She was jealous of my face! She was two-faced, back-stabbing bugger and a haughty, frigid, unyielding bitch...

⁵⁵ Lady Macbeth (Act II, sc ii)

⁵⁶ Introducing Baudrillard's simulacra and simulation (1983) ahead of the Maid's discussion the same (p. 36)

⁵⁷ Macbeth (Act II, sc ii)

I say that, but I never really knew my mother. In my early years she was too busy running around from one social engagement to another. I was mostly raised by my spinster aunt – I believe you’ve met her already. She’s a dear old owl. Of course, her independent attitude has been passed on to me. In character, I’m not unlike the young, feisty Katharine Hepburn in *Adam’s Rib*, 1949⁵⁸. Obviously not to look at. No, in the looks department I’m more of an icy Hitchcock Blonde like... Grace Kelly... Yes, Grace Kelly in *High Society*.⁵⁹ Or, maybe, Grace Kelly in *Rear Window*⁶⁰. Or, Grace Kelly in *Dial M For Murder*⁶¹.

My unconstrained spirit has got me into some hot water, I can tell you. Driving fast cars, snorting cocaine and generally living life on the edge. This did nothing to endear me to my mother, the old trout. I said to her “you are jealous of my face... because you’ve got a face like Clapham Junction.”⁶² That didn’t go down too well, really. We had the most terrible, terrible, terrible row! It turned out that my mother had been paying more attention than I realised. She knew about the cars, the dancing, the drugs. Oh yes, I wanted her to know about all of them. But she also knew about... the affair.

There’s a certain foreign gentleman with whom I have... become acquainted. My mother knew about it and she had guessed the worst [HAND TO TUMMY, INDICATING PREGNANCY] “What will you do?” she wailed, “you have to get rid of it!” I refused. “How will you live?” she screamed, “even if he marries you,

⁵⁸ Cukor (1949)

⁵⁹ Walters (1956)

⁶⁰ Hitchcock (1954)

⁶¹ Hitchcock, (1954)

⁶² Not actually an intertextual reference here, but a joke made up by my father. It seems churlish not to give him some credit.

he doesn't have a penny. You'll have to say goodbye to this life of luxury, my girl."

"But mummy dearest," I implored, "you've got money. You've got enough money to support me, my husband, my child, a clutch of servants." She cackled, "oh no, young lady. You are not getting a penny out of me. Not a penny. First thing in the morning I shall have your allowance cancelled. I shall change my will!" But by the next morning, [BREEZILY] she was dead.

SMIRKS AND TURNS AWAY

DOCTOR: It was chilling to see. Could a creature of such beauty really be a killer? I was reminded of the work of Galton in the area of Eugenics.⁶³

SLIDE – GALTON, 3 COMPOSITES OF CRIMINALS⁶⁴

[BROWN BACKGROUND, PHOTOS OF MENS FACES INSIDE CIRCLES]

He assures us that those from higher genetic stock are unlikely to regress to the more lowly, animal behaviour of the genetically underdeveloped. I am sure that he is right. Criminality is, after all, a disposition in those of an inferior genetic order – the working classes, blacks,... foreigners.

I am certain that his theory is right, I cannot, however, help but be reminded of the great exceptions to the rule. The times when beauty has turned animal, criminal, murderous. Imprinted in my mind I can see the face of... Marlene Dietrich in the final reel of *Witness For The Prosecution*⁶⁵... [HORRIFIED HAND TO MOUTH] The fine, feminine features of Barbara Stanwyck in

⁶³ Galton (1883) as cited in Kemp (2000)

⁶⁴ As cited in Kemp (2000)

⁶⁵ Wilder (1957)

*Double Indemnity*⁶⁶... [FIGHTING BACK TEARS] Madonna in *Body Of Evidence*!!⁶⁷

LX - SNAP BLACKOUT

SLIDE – BLANK

THE DOCTOR STANDS IN THE DARKNESS AND SINGS

I've got you under my skin⁶⁸

I've got you deep in the heart of me

So deep in my heart you're nearly a part of me

I've got you under my skin

I've tried so not to give in

I've said to myself this affair never will go so well

But why should I resist when baby I know so well

I've got you under my skin

AS THE AUDIENCE'S EYES BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO THE LOW
LEVEL OF LIGHT FROM THE FIRE EXIT SIGNS, THEY CAN SEE THAT
THE DOCTOR IS SWAYING ABOUT DREAMILY, LOST IN A WORLD OF
HIS OWN

I'd sacrifice anything come what might for the sake of having you near

In spite of the warning voice that comes in the night and repeats in my ear

Don't you know, little fool, you never can win

Use your mentality, wake up to reality

⁶⁶ Wilder (1944)

⁶⁷ Edel (1992)

⁶⁸ Porter (1996)

But each time I do, just the thought of you makes me stop before I begin
I've got you under my skin

I'd sacrifice anything –

SLIDE [INTERRUPTS SONG]– THE INSPECTOR

[MAN'S FACE WITH GLASSES]

THE DOCTOR SPINS ROUND TO FACE THE AUDIENCE

DOCTOR: *Inspector!!!*.... “Pull yourself together, Doctor,”

LX– LIGHTS SNAP UP TO GENERAL COVER AGAIN

How silly of me to get carried away with double indemnities and bodies of evidence. The Inspector is ever on the ball and I am honoured to be his right hand man. We walk out of Judith's treasury, through the French doors to the outside. Along a path, away from the house, is a long high wall with a small door. I unlocked this fourth door and lead the Inspector into my secret garden.⁶⁹

SLIDE – THE GARDEN

[GARDEN WITH HIGH BRICK WALL AND METAL GATE]

The Butler had already been sent for and was waiting for us at the door. He stood aside and ushered us in with a small bow – ever the professional, despite his oily and obsequious tone...

⁶⁹ The fourth locked door in Bluebeard's castle (Bartok, 1911).

BUTLER [COCKNEY ACCENT AND SHIFTY, FIDGETING PHYSICAL MOVEMENTS]: After you gents... [PAUSE, TO THE AUDIENCE] It's a good job, you know, being a butler.

SLIDE – THE BUTLER

[MAN IN SUIT, WEARING RING]

Been good for me, at any rate. I mean, what other option was there? Boy like me, no real education. It was either Spitalfields market, lugging lumps of dead pig about, or it was training for domestic service. And I've done well. Star of the show, you might say. You see, there's always a butler, in this kind of thing [SWEEP OF THE HAND], always a butler. Sometimes I've got a big part (You know, "the butler done it") or sometimes I'm quite happy with a little cameo. So, sometimes the butler done it and sometimes he didn't. That's my secret. Of course, I'm not always the same. Usually, when I've got my smaller parts I play it up a bit, go all posh. "Has the solid silver service been perfectly polished?" all that. But, if I've got a really meaty role... you know, If I done it, then I play it down, do it all common. 'Cause you can't trust commoners, especially not cockneys. We're money-grubbing, us cockneys, we got no respect for class. And cockney butlers, them's the worst. Ideas above their station, you see. Trying to go up in the world and they'll do anything to get ahead. They cannot be trusted. False face must hide what the false heart does know⁷⁰, if you know what I mean.

It's a lucrative career, though. I'm earning good money. I wouldn't say no to a bit more money, of course, but I can't complain.

⁷⁰ Macbeth in Act I, sc vii

You see, Inspector, a cockney butler's caught on the edge of two different worlds. The common filthy world he's left behind and the gleaming, posh world he's aiming towards. On the edge of two different worlds and they'll do anything not to go back... anything. It will have blood, they say, blood will have blood.⁷¹

LX – SNAP TO DARK BLUE STATE

CD – SHORT BURST OF ARVO PART STRING MUSIC

DOCTOR REPEATS MOVES WHERE HE WALKS ABOUT THE SPACE
THOUGHTFULLY AS IF AT WORK, SMOOTHING DOWN HIS CLOTHES
AND DUSTING FURNITURE WITH HANKY, DOES BUSINESS WITH TEA-
TRAY. SUDDNELY STOPS AND PUTS HAND TO FORHEARD. THEN
PULLS HIMSLEF TOGETHER AND CARRIES ON.

MUSIC ENDS, CD OFF

LX – SNAP BACK TO GENERAL COVER

DOCTOR: At this point, The Butler was looking directly at me.

SLIDE – GALTON, NARROW OVOIDS & REGULAR FEATURES ⁷²

[WHITE BACKGROUND, BLACK PHOTOS, HANDWRITTEN TEXT]

Being well acquainted with Francis Galton's seminal 1883 work on narrow ovoids and regular features, I knew there was trouble. That's right, The Butler's eyes were far too close together.

The Inspector said to him "I can't help feel that you're holding something back." The Butler thought for a moment.

⁷¹ Macbeth in Act III, sc iv

⁷² As cited in Kemp (2000)

BUTLER: Look, gents, I've been straight with you so far. I want to help you and I want to clear my conscience.... I was blackmailing the lady of the house. I overheard her talking to that Spinster, ages ago this was. I heard The Spinster say that Judith had killed her last husband by the administration of a deadly South-American poison which cannot be detected by modern medicine. So, I got to thinking, I'm earning good money, but I could always do with earning a bit more. So I just come out and asked her. Money in return for keeping my trap shut.

DOCTOR: "You blackmailed her?" asked the Inspector.

BUTLER: I did it over the phone so she wouldn't know who I was, I disguised my voice by putting a hanky over the receiver. Worked a treat. She was right up for it, couldn't give me the cash quick enough! And so it went on. Until the other night. When I went to take her the usual evening sherry at ten minutes to ten, I could hear voices inside the room. "I won't stand for it," I could hear her saying "blackmail is a cruel and dastardly crime." She must have worked out it was me, I thought. She was already telling someone about it.

Remember what I said, gents. A cockney butler, on the edge of the horrible world he's just left. On the edge of the wonderful world he wants to get into. What would I do if she told everyone? I'd be buggered! I'd do anything not to have to go backwards... anything!

DOCTOR: In the silence that followed, I heard a rustling. Someone was lurking on the other side of the wall. We quickly dismissed The Butler and I

lead the Inspector out of the secret garden to the grounds of the house, out into my expansive domains.⁷³

SLIDE – EXPANSIVE DOMAINS

[GRASS STRETCHING INTO DISTANCE WITH LONG POND]

Wandering around the grounds we caught sight of the man who I have felt to be the most suspicious of all the suspects – The Foreigner. Anyone with half a brain has read Darwin and knows exactly what he was getting at.⁷⁴ Some races are more advanced than others. That is, people of a foreign extraction are backward and prone to immoral behaviour. The Foreigner pretended not to have seen us, cowardly fool, and walked in the other direction. We dashed across the grass to catch up with him. When we reached him, he was charm itself.

SLIDE – THE FOREIGNER.

[MAN IN LONG BLACK COAT]

FOREIGNER [RIDICULOUSLY THICK EASTERN EUROPEAN ACCENT AND PROUD, UPRIGHT POSTURE]: Gentlemen! I just was enjoying the having of a ceeeegarette. I also was enjoying the viewing of these most greatly beautiful grounds. The expansive domains of your exquisitely house. Only fitting for a great man such as yourself, Doctoree.

DOCTOR: Fawning foreign fool!

⁷³ The fifth locked door in Duke Bluebeard's castle.

⁷⁴ Darwin (1859), as cited in Kemp (2000)

FOREIGNER: I find it fitting that I should meet you gentlemen outside of the house. I am, after all, on the outside of the story. I am on the edge of these, how do you say, shenanigans! You may not have noticed, but I am foreeeign. I'm not really sure quite where I come from because, of course, this is not my native accent. It's an accent made up by some actor somewhere. I can come from a variety of different foreeeign countries, but I am always untrustworthy and mysterious. So this time my accent is... somewhere.... Eastern European? Somewhere a bit *Fiddler On The Roof*.⁷⁵ What can I do? Oy Vey!

But, I accept my position here, on the outside of the house. I am, after all, foreeeign, and probably Jewish. Anyone in their right mind knows that I can't be trusted. There are daggers in men's smiles: the near in blood, the nearer bloody.⁷⁶ And let me tell you – they are right! I am ruthless, heartless, merciless!

Let me explain my mysterious presence in sleepy Chipping Cleghorn. There are two reasons. Firstly, the business. I am the business partner of Judith, the deceased. But forgive my terrible, terrible, terrible English grammar! I should say I was Judith's business-partner-to-be. She died before the deal could be struck. Such a tragedy... We could have made a fortune together. She liked my ruthless, heartless, merciless business sense and I liked... her money.

But but but – oy vey, gott in himmell – that was not the only thing that I liked. I also took a shine to... her daughter. The Bright Young Thing. I gave her attention, affection and cocaine, then I fucked her rigid. When Judith found out that her daughter was pregnant by a foreign Jew, she hit the roof. Oy vey,

⁷⁵ Jewison (1971)

⁷⁶ Donalbain in *Macbeth* (Act II, sc iii)

bagel-with-cream-cheese. She made threats, gentlemen, big threats... Back in my home country I am a very important man.

SLIDE – LOMBROSO, PORTRAITS OF ITALIAN AND GERMAN CRIMINALS⁷⁷

["GLI ANROPOLOGI CRIMINILASTI", CHART OF OVAL-SHAPED PHOTOS]

A very important married man. If the word got out that I had fucked an English girl rigid and got her pregnant. Oy oy oy oy oy oy oyoyoyoyoyoyoy..... vey Judith told me that she had written to me wife. She had the letter in her hand, I could even see the address. She planned to post it first thing in the morning. She had to be stopped, gentlemen. She had to be stopped.

DOCTOR: The Inspector asked me “are you keeping a record of all these interviews? I must have every detail.” I told him that I had detailed every detail in the most painstaking detail. “Excellent,” he replied. “Take me to the next locked door.” And so across the expansive domains we trekked to another door in a long brick wall, seemingly at the edge of the estate. On the other side of the door is the lake.

SLIDE – LAKE OF TEARS

[LAKE WITH ISLAND, BUILDING ON THE ISLAND]

Traditionally known as the lake of tears⁷⁸, I told the Inspector, it has an island at the centre of which is the family mausoleum. My family's dead have always been interred there and Judith will be no exception. The mausoleum will be her final resting place.

⁷⁷ As cited in Kemp (2000)

⁷⁸ The sixth locked door in Bluebeard's castle (Bartok, 1911).

We circled the lake and crossed the thin thin bridge on the other side so as to reach the island. Little did we expect what we found. The Maid, sitting on the doorstep of my family mausoleum.

SLIDE – THE MAID

[YOUNG WOMAN IN PINK DRESS, LAYING DOWN]

Her face seemed flushed, her eyes red and sore. I wondered if she had been chopping onions as part of her daily chores, but saw that she was not in uniform. Of course, it was her day off.

LX – SNAP TO DARK BLUE STATE

CD – SHORT BURST OF ARVO PART STRING MUSIC

FOR THE THIRD TIME, HE WALKS ABOUT THE SPACE THOUGHTFULLY

AS IF AT WORK, SMOOTHING DOWN CLOTHES AND DUSTING

FURNITURE WITH HANKY, SUDDENLY STOPS AND PUTS HAND TO

FORHEARD. THEN PULLS HIMSELF TOGETHER AND MOVES TO KNEEL

CS.

MUSIC ENDS, CD OFF

LX – SNAP BACK TO SPOT CS

MAID [REALISTIC PERFORMANCE STYLE, NO FUNNY ACCENT]: This is where they'll put her, isn't it? In the crypt? I've come her again and again since it happened... I'm sorry. I know you're not interested in seeing a stupid serving girl in tears. I'm sorry... but I don't know what to do. I don't belong here. I'm not like the others. Everyone else, it's like you've met them before, in other places. They're not real, not really real, they're all copied from somewhere else, but not copied from real life. It's like they've only ever existed in a film or

a book or something. They're a copy of a copy that's taken on a life of it's own and been copied endlessly, until it doesn't have a meaning any more. But I'm not like that... I'm just me. Nothing special, just real life. And I feel lonely. It's a terrible thing to feel lonely, isn't it, but I feel so lonely. Especially since Judith... my Judith.

Look Doctor... I know you know... Judith told me you found out. I'm sorry. I never planned to take her away from you or anything. What could I do? I'm just me. I'm just a serving girl from Frimley. If things are going to happen then I'm the last person who'd be able to stop them.

But I did love her. My Judith. My special girl. I tried not to at first and then later I felt like she had led me astray. I mean, I've got to be realistic. It's okay for her. It's okay for that Spinster even. They're posh. When you've got money, you can do what you like, it doesn't matter who you upset. But I'm just a servant. If I get myself a reputation – for that sort of thing, then... I've got to be careful, that's all I'm saying. I'm not like the others here. I'm just me.

So, time went on and I knew that I hadn't been led astray. I'd chosen it. I'd chosen to follow my heart. When I realised that, I was happy. Happier than I've ever been. Happier than any of the others here. But now... my special girl's gone. "Her eyes were open, but the senses were shut"⁷⁹ I heard them say that once in a play. Some woman with blood on her hands, couldn't get it off...⁸⁰ Now I just keep thinking that Judith must be cold. She must be so cold without me to snuggle up with.

⁷⁹ Doctor and Gentlewoman discussing Lady Macbeth (Act V, sc i)

⁸⁰ Allusion to Lady Macbeth's 'out, damned spot' (Act V, sc i)

And you probably think it was me that did it. I'm not even sure myself. Maybe I did kill her. I don't know.

DOCTOR: I asked "you mean to say, you might have killed Judith, but you can't remember?"

MAID: I suppose so. That's what it does to you, this house. There are copies of copies and eventually you can't tell the difference between real life and the copy. I just don't know any more. I needed some help, so I decided to use my head and I went and got one of the Doctor's books. It was Havelock Ellis⁸¹ talking about... women like me. Inverts he called us. I don't know, maybe I'm just stupid, but it didn't all fit together, not the way that he says. He thinks that because Judith and I loved each other, that there's link between us loving each other and other types of immorality, like being a criminal, being a murderer.

Did Judith lead me astray? Did she make me like that? If you follow it all through... did she turn me into a murderer? Or would I be like that naturally? Does that mean that it's in my nature to kill people? That's what the books seem to say. I wouldn't like to think that Judith lead me astray and taught me to be a killer. That would be really horrid. But on the other hand, if it's in my nature, maybe that's not so bad. It just doesn't fit together. I'm just me, and when I was with Judith... it was just... [SMILES] Just us. But not now that she's gone and again and again I come here to the mausoleum to say night-night. Sleep tight, Judith, don't let the bedbugs bite.... Here comes a candle to light you to bed. Here comes a chopper to chop off your head.

DOCTOR: I was moved, moved to tears as I listened to this story of lost love.

⁸¹ Havelock Ellis (1889) as cited in Kemp (2000)

LX - CROSS AFADE TO GENERAL COVER

The Inspector, however, didn't seem to be listening to The Maid. He was deep in thought. Suddenly, he took my arm and led me away from The Maid. "Call everyone together," he told me. "Meet in the library in one hour." I was perplexed. "I thought you wanted to see inside the mausoleum? The seventh locked door?" I said. "No need," he answered, striding away across the grass, "no need. Everyone in the library. One hour."

SLIDE – LIBRARY

[LARGE ROOM, PLUSH SOFAS, LOTS OF BOOKS]

DOCTOR: The library, one hour later. All were assembled. I sat beside the Inspector. Pride of place on his right-hand side, his right hand man. I surveyed the suspects before me.

That bitter shrew of a Spinster and her deviant desire for revenge. The poor bumbling old Major with his history of violence and huge unpaid debt to the deceased. The Bright Young Thing, brimming with bitterness towards her mother and desperate for money to support her unborn bastard child. The oily and obsequious Butler, the ghastly scent of blackmail reeking from his every pore. The ruthless, heartless, merciless Foreigner with a reputation to protect and a pregnant girl to forget. Last to come was the Maid. She really is the odd one out. Despite her degenerate inversion, I must admit to a soft spot for her. The sight of her, bereft on the mausoleum steps has not yet left me. It is burned against my retina.

The Inspector wasted no time. “I’m sure you all know why I’ve called you here. Whilst interviewing you all, I made no bones about the fact that everyone here has a secret. All in all, you’ve revealed your secrets to me quite readily. I thank you for that. Now I can tell you, I have drawn my conclusion. [SLOW, MEASURED] I know who murdered Judith Duncan.”

A ripple of shock ran through the room. I watched intently each of the suspects, trying to discern a culpable twitch of the eye, a guilty rise of the adam’s apple, but I was none the wiser. My powers of deduction are no match for those of the Inspector.

“I’m not in the habit of issuing ultimatⁱ,” the Inspector intoned with icy grammatical correctness. “I shall allow the killer the dignity to bring themselves to me and admit their crime. I would only make it crystal clear to you all that I know everything. Remember that.⁸² [PAUSE] You may all take your leave, Ladies.... and Gentlemen. “

When the suspects were gone, I implored, “Inspector, is this safe? To let the killer leave? Maybe in desperation they will go on the run or kill again!” He chuckled confidently and again said “I know everything, remember that.”

The identity of the killer was still a mystery to me, so I laid out my notes on the library desk and scanned them, looking for some vital clue. “Inspector,” I said, “I still have no notion who the killer can be.” He looked at me with curiosity. “But Doctor,” he said “you have seen all the same evidence as me, been present in all the same interviews. The identity of the killer is obvious to me, surely it must be to you too?”

⁸² Quote from Poirot in *Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (Christie, 1911).

“No, no,” I wailed. “I still have no idea. [ARMS OUTSTRETCHED] Tell me, Inspector. Tell me who killed her!”

He looked at me without expression. [ARMS DROP DOWN TO SIDE] “You did,” he said quietly. “You killed Judith Duncan.”

PAUSE

It was preposterous, I said, unthinkable. A respectable man like myself kill my own dear wife? I stormed from the room in outrage knowing that my protests meant nothing to the indomitable Inspector. He had already seen that culpable twitch of they eye, that guilty rise of the adam’s apple. Hell... is... murky.⁸³

I came here, to the mausoleum.⁸⁴

SLIDE –THE MAUSOLEUM

[CLOSE-UP OF MAUSOLEUM EXTERIOR, WITH TREES]

The seventh locked door that The Inspector told me there was no need to see. To think that he already knew. He knew by watching me listen to the Maid, he said. Why would I have been so moved at her revelations if not through my own guilt? I denied it to his face, of course, but now I know that there is no use. The game is up, and here I am in the mausoleum.

SLIDE – MAUSOLEUM INTERIOR

[CRYPT WITH BLACK METAL GATES]

⁸³ Lady Macbeth (Act V, sc i)

⁸⁴ The seventh and final locked door in Duke Bluebeard’s Castle, where Judith finds all of Buebeard’s previous wives trapped together in living death.

LX – LOWER LEVEL OF GENERAL COVER AS WEL AS BLUE FLOOD AND RED FLOOD

[PICKS UP CANDLES AND LIGHTS THEM] The Inspector will come to meet me here in a matter of moments. I should despise him, but I can't. Good to his word he has promised no hordes of policemen, no wailing sirens. [smirking wearily] I can turn myself in with dignity.

First though, I shall explain everything to him. Leave no stone unturned. I shall begin by defining my relationship with Judith Duncan. I had always known that she was a lesbian. That was why I married her. I believe the term is a "lavender liaison". You see, I too am an invert,

SLIDE – ANTONIO MASELLO, THE GERMAN PEDERAST ⁸⁵

[BROWN DRAWING OF MAN IN HAT, WITH FLOPPY SCARF]

a homosexual. But unlike Judith I knew that this inversion was a terrible, terrible, terrible crime against nature which I must fight with all my will. Our arrangement was that we would both act as an alibi for the other – a "beard" is the correct term. Part of the deal, though, was that we must never indulge our sexual proclivities. When I found out about her affair with the Maid, I was horrified. The whole arrangement was shot to pieces because of Judith's base animal desires. Of course, I could have simply divorced her, but I didn't want to. I wanted revenge on Judith. Why should she have love when I have nothing?

[PICKING UP PACE] Let's not fool ourselves. There is something of the inevitable to all of this. It was Havelock Ellis⁸⁶ and his criminologist chums who

⁸⁵ As cited in Kemp (2000)

told us that when a man inverts the sexual roles, he wants to invert all other social rules as well. The Psychotic Homosexual.⁸⁷

SLIDE – HAVELOCK ELLIS, FRONTISPIECE FROM “THE CRIMINAL”⁸⁸
[WHITE BACKGROUND, VERY FAINT PICTURE OF MAN’S FACE]

He must have been right. Just look at all the evidence. Marlon Brando in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, 1967⁸⁹. Michael Caine in *Dressed to Kill*.⁹⁰ Christopher Reeve and Michael Caine together in *Death-trap*⁹¹. Clint Eastwood’s *The Eiger Sanction*⁹². Sinatra in *The Detective*, 1968⁹³. Al Pacino in *Cruising*, 1980⁹⁴. Hitchcock, of course had a detailed knowledge of psychotic homosexuals. *Murder*, 1930⁹⁵, *Rope*, 1948⁹⁶, *Strangers on a Train*, 1951⁹⁷ – psychotic homosexual killers all. I could go on. [FAST PACE] *American Gigolo*⁹⁸, *Modesty Blaise*⁹⁹, *Diamonds Are Forever*¹⁰⁰, *Suddenly Last Summer*¹⁰¹, *Psycho*¹⁰², *Silence of the Lambs*,¹⁰³ *The Talented Mr Ripley*.¹⁰⁴ I could go on. [PAUSE] And on... and on.

The real question, though, is how did I do it?. I shall explain: As you know, I was with Judith at 8pm. She was nervous about the blackmail and kept

⁸⁶ Havelock Ellis (1889), as cited in Kemp (2000)

⁸⁷ As described in Russo (1981)

⁸⁸ As cited in Kemp (2000)

⁸⁹ Huston (1967) as cited in Russo (1981)

⁹⁰ De Palma (1979) as cited in Russo (1981)

⁹¹ Hooper (1976) as cited in Russo (1981)

⁹² Eastwood (1975) as cited in Russo (1981)

⁹³ Gordon (1968) as cited in Russo (1981)

⁹⁴ Friedkin (1980) as cited in Russo (1981)

⁹⁵ Hitchcock (1930) as cited in Russo (1981)

⁹⁶ Hitchcock (1948) as cited in Russo (1981)

⁹⁷ Hitchcock (1951) as cited in Russo (1981)

⁹⁸ Schrader (1980) as cited in Russo (1981)

⁹⁹ Losey (1966) as cited in Russo (1981)

¹⁰⁰ Hamilton (1971) as cited in Russo (1981)

¹⁰¹ Mankiewicz (1959) as cited in Russo (1981)

¹⁰² Hitchcock (1960) as cited in Russo (1981)

¹⁰³ Demme (1991)

¹⁰⁴ Minghella (2000)

looking out of the window. I was called away on a house visit at 9.15. The Spinster says she went in to see Judith at 9.30. The Butler took her sherry at 9.50, but heard her voice within and so withdrew. The Major, out on the path near Judith's window, also heard her voice coming from the room, as late as 10pm. I returned from my doctoral visit at 10.05 to find Judith already dead.

In reality, I had left the window open and on leaving the house, I ran around to the window, and climbed in. Judith's eyes looked their last and her arms took their last embrace. I stabbed her between the breasts at 9.20. I left again immediately and went to administer to Old Tom's bunions, this providing me with an alibi, along with the fact that the others thought she was alive right up until 10pm. It was all a hoax, of course. The Spinster never went in to see Judith, the nosy dyke bitch was rifling through Judith's personal papers in the office, looking for evidence of her brother's murder. The Maid saw her. But what of the Butler and the Major, who were both outside and heard Judith's voice from within? That's where this devilish little device came in handy.

HE TAKES A DICTAPHONE OUT OF HAT D.S.C.

These new-fangled devices have just been invented and I used it to my own dastardly end. When we had been talking, I convinced Judith to dictate several letters, saying that my secretary could type them up for her later. After stabbing her between the brrreasts, I left the device on the window sill where I knew the Major would be hear it on his regular evening stroll.

[FAST PACE] However, I needed to retrieve the device on entering the room, but it was on the windowsill, in full view of the door. So, before leaving I placed a chair in the middle of the room [HE LUMBERS ABOUT WITH THE CHAIR] to block the view from the door to the window. On entering the room I dashed

straight to the window to shut it, at the same time hiding this device neatly in my pocket. I had presumed nobody would notice that chair in the middle of the floor, [PAUSE] but the Major did notice it.¹⁰⁵ That was my downfall. [LONG PAUSE] The rest was all logic. The Inspector told me “Everyone in these stories has something to hide. Remember that.”

STARTS TO BLOW OUT CANDLES

Oh, Inspector, I should despise you but I can't. [BLOW] I have adored being your right hand man. [BLOW] Watson to your Holmes. [BLOW] Hastings to your Poirot. [BLOW] Juliet to your Romeo¹⁰⁶ [LONG BLOW]. My only love sprung from my only hate. Too early seen unknown and known too late.¹⁰⁷ And so I shall tell you everything when you arrive, my dearest. There will be no secrets between us. No stone unturned.

Afterwards, I shall do the deed. Poison will be your timeless end¹⁰⁸, Inspector. [HE POINTS TO THE BOTTLE] You will drink all and leave no friendly drop to help me after.¹⁰⁹ Good night, good night, parting is such sweet sorrow.¹¹⁰ We shall both die here in the family tomb. The Raven himself is hoarse. Make thick my blood, that my keen knife see not the wound it makes.¹¹¹ [WAILING MANICALLY UNTIL END] What is the point of being a psychotic homosexual if I don't get the last bloody word? Is this a dagger I see before me, the handle

¹⁰⁵ All explanation of murder narrative, including bizarre Dictaphone device, referencing Christie, 1926.

¹⁰⁶ The Doctor recites the same text as page 10, but changes 'Macduff to your Malcolm' to 'Juliet to your Romeo', marking a return to quotation from this play, which was first introduced on page 10, but not referred to again until now, leading ultimately to a conflation of both Juliet and Lady Macbeth's different uses of a knife.

¹⁰⁷ Juliet in Act I, sc v

¹⁰⁸ Juliet in Act V, sc iii

¹⁰⁹ Juliet in Act V, sc iii

¹¹⁰ Juliet in Act II, sc ii

¹¹¹ Lady Macbeth, conflation of three separate lines from Act I, sc iv

turned toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee¹¹² [HOLDING DAGGER
ALOFT] Oh Happy Dagger! This is thy sheath; there rust and let...me...
DIE!¹¹³

LX– SNAP BO

SLIDE – BLANK

PAUSE

CD – TRACK THREE [LOUIS PRIMA'S *I'VE GOT YOU UNDER MY SKIN*]

LX – LIGHTS UP

CURTAIN CALL

LX – FADE TO B.O. AND FADE UP HOUSE LIGHTS

CD – LEAVE TO PLAY UNTIL END OF TRACK THREE

¹¹² Macbeth in Act II, sc i

¹¹³ Juliet in Act V, sc iii

PRESET

MUSIC: JAPANESE POP¹

OPENING CHAT

Hello. Good Evening. How are you? Don't worry, I'm not going to hassle you, it's not audience participation, so just RELAX. FEEL GOOD. This reminds me, I've got a live CD of Aretha Franklin and that's what she says 'just relax, feel good', she says 'Loan us your soul for a few minutes, I promise you'll get it back.' Then she sings Respect really fast, so fast the backing singers can't keep up. [SINGS] 'sock-it-to-me, sock-it-to-me, sock-it-to-me, sock-it-to-me, sock-it-to-me, sock-it-to-me, sock-it-to-me, sock-it-to-me re-re-re-re-re-re-re-re-re-respect'²

Anyway, I'm not Aretha, I'm David. It's funny when you do this kind of thing. Some people think that I'm an actor doing a proper play with characters and a story and wigs.... In an 'intimate' venue - how intimate are we, tonight ? Four people? Apparently, the average fringe audience is 2.5 people, so we can't complain. Some people think that I'm an avant-garde artiste and it must be really personal and confessional, that I'm going to rip all my clothes off and throw poo at the audience... Later... In a way, though, it's neither and it's both because this isn't my story.

¹ Fantastic Plastic Machine (1998), Yukari Fresh (1998), Hi-Posi (1998), Takako Minakawa (1998)

² Franklin, 1968

Floating above the city, there's a break in the white cloud. We can see a lake with limes and cherries and lotus flowers. Can you smell them?

So it's apt, actually, that I was telling you about Aretha (sock-it-to-me, sock-it-to-me) because I wanted to mention something before we start about songs, about the music that you listen to when you're lonely. All the lonely people. Where do they all come from?³ Anyway, music you listen to when you're lonely - I remember seeing Bjork, the pop star, on television and she said that she thought that writing pop songs was a very important thing. She said that when you've got a broken heart, you don't go and listen to a politician's speech, you put on your headphones in the middle of the night and listen to an Aretha Franklin song. And that's what soothes you.⁴

MUSIC FADE OUT SLOWLY

I remember when my Aunt Maureen died after thirteen years of cancer. When I was little she was my hero because she was really funny, she wrote messages on my mum's mirror in lipstick and she didn't even get in trouble when she said *shit-pig-bastard*. A policeman gave her a breath test once. 'Will you blow into this device please, madam?'... 'I will my dear, because a new experience I relish.' At her funeral, for some reason, they played Bette Midler singing *Wind Beneath My Wings*⁵ which is really fucking cheesy. Then in the chorus she sings 'didn't you know that you're my hero...' [PAUSE]

³ The first of a series of quotations from McCartney's Eleanor Rigby (1966)

⁴ A genuine reference to Bjork, but the source is now untraceable.

⁵ Midler, 1989

So... loan us your soul for a few minutes. I promise you'll get it back.⁶ I'm imagining a lot of happy people and most of you are with someone you love. Well, you are the lucky ones. All over the world there are lots of people who are alone tonight. I imagine most of us have been in that situation at some time or another. I know I have. Recently I heard a most beautiful song with a dynamic lyric that really expresses this feeling of loneliness. It means a lot to me personally and I'd like to share it with you... I think you'll see what I mean...⁷

HE CLINKS THE CYMBALS TOGETHER

HEADPHONES

MUSIC: BJORK'S HEADPHONES VERY LOUD.⁸

BJORK SINGS (SCRATCHY):

Genius to fall asleep to your tape last night

Sounds go through the muscles

These abstract wordless

Movements

They start off cells that haven't been touched before

(CLEAR) Nothing will be the same

⁶ Again, a reference to Franklin (1968) but also a self-reflexive reference to the other two shows. Each of them began with either The Doctor, myself or LaToya using this phrase.

⁷ Direct quotation from the spoken intro to Knight (1972)

⁸ Gudmundsdottir, 1989

I like this resonance

It elevates me

I don't recognise myself

This is very interesting

MUSIC FADES DOWN AND RUNS UNDER NEXT SCENE

STELLA CHAT

DAVID HOLDS UP CANVAS

STELLA: One time I accidentally stapled a horse-racing bet to my thumb. I was working in the betting shop and they wouldn't take me to the hospital until the end of the shift so I worked on for four hours with a bet stapled to my thumb. Then my boss said he didn't have time to drive me all the way to A-and-E so he just dropped me off at the bus stop.

When my Dad died I sat in the kitchen for three days staring at the lino. No point calling an ambulance, because he was definitely dead, and I knew that funeral places cost a fortune so I just sat there wondering where the money would come from. Every hour I'd go upstairs and look at him, just lying there. He'd started to leak. That happens quicker than you'd think, actually. Buried along with his name... nobody came.⁹ You have to read between the lines at a funeral, eh?. 'Colourful character!' That usually means he fucked his kids up

⁹ Eleanor Rigby quotation (McCartney, 1966)

the arse every Sunday while the wife was out at Safeways. After the funeral I went back in to the betting shop, really nervous because I'd taken time off without asking. Morning, Stella. Morning. Nobody had noticed. Ten years of work, nobody noticed. After an hour I said 'I'm just popping out to buy a Mars bar'... I never went back. I could do anything I like now. It's funny, I waited all these years to be free of him, and now I've got no idea what to do.

ADECCO#

SOUND, RECORDED VOICE

ADECCO WOMAN (HARD SOUTH AFRICAN VOICE): [GROAN] I can't take any more. [WHISPER] The boredom. Did I come all the way from Johannesburg to sit in this pisshole of an office all day talking to mental defectives?

SOUND ENDS

(LIVE) Good morning madam and welcome to Makeba Employment Agency.¹⁰ We incentivise strategic partnerships, implement mission-critical synergies, and facilitate holistic channels to high-level, hand-picked, blue-chip, world-class, first-class, first-rate clients. How can I help you? Fill in this form.

You've finished already? Well done. Name: Stella Ashputtle?¹¹ Is that your real name? Not going to be a film star are you? I'm sure I don't need to tell you that. Education: You've put nothing in this column. It means exams and

¹⁰ Self-reflexive reference to *In The Shade*, which features South African Miriam Makeba

¹¹ Ashputtle – German name for Cinderella.

stuff. You didn't get any? Worked ten years part-time in a betting shop. Because have spent last fifteen years looking after very sick father. Aaaaah. How is he, love?... It's a relief for them in the end. Now, I do have work to do and I would appreciate it if you could leave me some workplace headspace in which to carry out my workload. Feel free to come back when you are more experienced and generally better.

SOUND, RECORDED VOICE

ADECCO: I had an affair with an Italian man for a while, but it didn't work out. I share a flat with a colleague now. The Italian phones the answermachine in the middle of the night saying 'brute lesbiche! Lo so che ci siete la, respond il telefono!' which roughly translates as 'ugly lesbians, I know you're there. Answer the phone.'

RECORDED VOICE ENDS

ADECCO WOMAN (LIVE): Stella! I'm absolutely not supposed to do this, my boss would kill me... . I got a phone call yesterday from some woman, right scatty bitch. Wanted help round the house, a cleaning lady, I suppose. I told her I couldn't help, but she insisted I take her address. You could go and see her, but don't say I sent you. Off you go.

SHE GIVES THE AUDIENCE A HARD LOOK AND THEN WALKS USC.

CRYING

MUSIC

YUMEJI'S THEME¹²

DAVID PERFORMS A SHORT DANCE OF 'CRYING' AND MOVING THE BALL.

MUSIC ENDS

DAD

RECORDED VOICE

STELLA'S FATHER: Stella! Stella! There you are. I thought you'd left your old Dad sitting here by himself.

RECORDED VOICE ENDS

(LIVE) I've shit myself. The tortoise was already poking his head out of the hole, but then there was a thing on Richard and Judy about gays. I laughed. Then the whole lot came out. It was quite runny so I think it's strained through my pyjamas and into the sofa. That's what happens when you go away and leave me. If you thought about it properly you could've saved yourself the bother. You never think things through. Your old mum used to say 'she's a clever one, our Stella.' Turning in her grave she must be.

I can't blame you, though, Stells, I can't blame you. You're an angel, looking after you old Dad. Must be quite nice for you, spending time with your old

¹² Umebayashi, 2000

Dad. That bloody betting shop don't want you full time. Still, it's a fucking hard life. I only think they took you on because I'd spent so much money in the place I practically own shares in that fuckin' betting shop. Friggin' betting shop, 'scuse my French.

What's for dinner? Microwave dog shit? I seen that Paki family over the road. They look after their old mum like she's the queen of friggin' Sheba. You'd look after me better if you were a Paki...

PRETTY WOMAN CHAT

Do you remember Pretty Woman?¹³ I love that film.

MUSIC: HARP [cheval mécanique, Tansman]¹⁴

Do you remember the cool friend? *Fifty bucks, Grandpa. For seventy five the wife can watch.* Julia should have gone with her.

Now, you look like a typical Edinburgh Fringe kind-of-crowd, very intellectual – maybe not you. So, I don't need to tell any of you that Pretty Woman was a scathing Marxist parody of the class system. Poor poor Julia Roberts, she was tested like a brood mare. Can she buy expensive clothes? Can she eat in a restaurant with lots of cutlery? And the ultimate test - can she go to the opera... and cry?

¹³ Marshall, 1990

¹⁴ from Laskine, 1993

I remember hearing the news on the radio some time last year and the first item was that Isreal had killed the spiritual leader of hamas. Then, the torso of a ten year old Nigerian boy had been found in a suitcase in the Thames. Then 'more shocking revelations' about the Beckhams' marriage.¹⁵ These poor celebrities. My heart goes out to them. No, really. It's like living in a blazing house. They simply have to get out, to jump over the wall and make a run for it.

Stella's a real person. I met Stella on a train. She asked me to turn down my iPod, then asked what it was I was listening to and we started chatting about music, about the kind music that you listen to when you've got a broken heart. She told me about looking after her Dad for all those years, no friends, no relationship. Maybe it's because I was a stranger, but she was very frank. She told me that she'd never been kissed. Not even hugged very often. Her mother was never the warmest of women, even after she died. Well, obviously, she wasn't warm after she died. You know what I mean.¹⁶

POP MUSIC FADES IN UNDER¹⁷

When it all got too much for her she'd push the rug under her single bed, put her headphones on do disco dancing. I won an award once, at the school disco. But mostly, I do it by myself – just for me.

¹⁵ A genuine news report on Radio Spar Live in Spar supermarket, but now untraceable as a source.

¹⁶ All untrue. Stella is fictional.

¹⁷ S'il Vous Plait by Fantastic Plastic Machine, 1998

MUSIC ENDS

A.P.

AP: Sweet christ on a cunt! Thank GOD it's you. I thought it was Nick!!!
Mother FUCK! Quick, come in. QUICK!

This woman answered the door wearing a cherry-red dog collar, lime-green fishnets, a chain-mail bra and patent high heels in the shape of horses hooves. Stella's never seen anything like it. [STELLA] but I love it!

AP: I'm Adrienne Parmentier, but absolutely everyone calls me A.P. You are...
Stella. Nice to meet you. Well sit down, kipper.

DAVID: And she waves her hand towards several leather sofas that are so plump they look like they must have dead bodies stuffed inside them.¹⁸ (SITS)
Stella notices as the hand waves that there's a finger missing. *Your hand!* and immediately flushes with embarrassment.

AP: Gambling accident! Stick or twist? Sometimes it's more literal than one thinks. Still, we live and learn. Simon, look it's not Nick after all, it's Stella.

DAVID: A rather dashing young man comes in. His hair is done in those little white-person dreadlocks. He's wearing a pair of lycra cycling shorts, but that's

¹⁸ Allusion to Dorian Corey's dead partner sewn up inside leather in Livingstone (1994) as cited in In The Shade.

all. He sits down on the sofa with A.P. Stella feels quite over-dressed in her fleecy bodywarmer.

AP: We've been up all night speeding our tits off, getting up to god-knows-what in the bedroom. Simon likes to be spanked with a slipper that's been soaked in piss. Don't you, my little cumslut? Coffee? Croissant? Is it too early for a drambuie and cherryade? I'm telling you darling, do not ever have a fucking affair. It is the grandest pain in the booty. Especially because Nick, my current husband, is rather handy with his fists. Simon says 'I like spanking, but there are limits!'

DAVID: Stella looks at the floor. She's never had a boyfriend, so an affair is pretty much off the radar. Her mind runs backwards to Sarah Meech's sixteenth birthday party. Gripping the bathmat with both fists while her head clunked against the base of the toilet. When he was finished he said... [UNCOMFORTABLE] "um, thanks. See ya." It's better than nothing, I suppose.

AP: Darling, I know you've come about the job. So, I really ought to give you some background info...They went to sea in a sieve¹⁹ - Ho ho ho - Ecstasy for cats - Quite! - Urinary tract infection - Ich bin von coffee-spoon - Chewing gum in my hair - Knees up, knees up, don't get the breeze up²⁰ - Black bottom like a frenzied whirligig - Rupauline, the younger, prettier sister - Off off off off off

¹⁹ Reference to Edward Lear's Owl and the Pussycat, 1901

²⁰ Quotation from Knees Up Mother Brown, Trad.

broadway²¹ - What fresh hell is this?²² – Nanotechnology - For the drama to start a woman must die²³ - Oy vey, bagel with cream cheese²⁴ – Xenakis²⁵ - Jolene Jowett - Up, up and away in my beautiful balloon - Monkey-woman. I go like this... - Pork chops, ribs, Hershey bars, heroin²⁶ - Stick it in my mancunt hard, mistress²⁷ - On m'apelle le serpent (kss, kss) - Vicks vaporub - English sausage – very horrible - Raven himself is hoarse²⁸ - The press, the wind, the telephone – too, too awful - High tone places²⁹ - Esto es yo, esto es yo y como hablo, y hablo a si, y hablo a si contigo³⁰ - Limes, cherries, big twisty DNA - Aretha live at Filmore West³¹ - Zip a dee doo dah, zip a dee ay³² - You are jealous of my face³³ - Death has sucked the honey from her breath³⁴ - Open locks, whoever knocks - Goose fat - Where do you want it, Tits or face?

So, that's you up to speed. Now, I must... go and... change. I can't go out on my Vespa in a mini-skirt with these crotchless panties.

DAVID: And with that Stella is left alone with a handsome young man with cycling shorts, a cup of coffee and nappy rash.

21 Quotation from Sandra Bernhard's *I'm Still Here, Dammit* (2001)

22 Attributed to Dorothy Parker, but not in print.

23 Self-reflexive reference to *On The Edge*.

24 Self-reflexive reference to *On The Edge*

25 Reference to the composer, also reference to *In The Shade*

26 Reference to *In The Shade*

27 Reference to *In The Shade*

28 Quotation from *Lady Macbeth* and reference to *On The Edge*

29 Quotation from Simone's *My Baby Just Cares For Me* (1957) and reference to *In The Shade*

30 Quotation from Neneh Cherry (1989) and reference to *In The Shade*.

31 Franklin, 1968

32 Reference to *Zip a dee doo dah* (Gilbert and Wrubel, 1946)

33 Reference to *On The Edge*

34 Quotation from *Romeo and Juliet* and reference to *On The Edge*

SIMON SNIPPET

RECORDED VOICE

SIMON (BIRMINGHAM ACCENT, RECORDED): Headbanging music is the thing that I like. Yes, when I was a student I used to have really long hair, long blond hair and I would go to metal clubs and do headbanging. I'd get terrible migraines sometimes, but it can be a great release - some air guitar and a good headbang.

RECORDED VOICE ENDS

BJORK CULTURE CHAT

MUSIC:

HARP (Etude de concert, Tournier) ³⁵

DAVID: I've said that it's funny when you do this kind of thing. We all know that if you have fun when you go to the theatre then it's mindless shit, but if it's boring then it is an intellectual powerhouse.

(ACCENT SLOWLY SLIDES INTO BJORK) It's interesting, though, because everything's been thrown up in the air and that relationship between high culture and low culture has become really wobbly. There are all these theorists arguing that there are no real grounds for drawing the line between what's worthy and unworthy. It means we have to make our own decisions about everything from opera right through to pop songs. This is really fascinating for someone like me who went to classical music school for my whole childhood, you know, learning Mahler and Mozart and all of that. Pop

³⁵ From Laskine, 1993

songs were like the spunk of the devil, you know. But now I make pop songs that anyone could listen to, anywhere in the world, not just in Iceland.

Do you know who I want to be like?... David Attenborough. I had a complete crush on him when I was a kid.

MUSIC PAUSE

DAVID: Actually, David Attenborough's daughter was my first teacher when I was five years old. He used to come and see us in school plays.

MUSIC UN-PAUSE

BJORK: It is as if he is the interpreter between the natural world and your Gran who's sat at home watching television. In a similar way I come from this hardcore musical world and I share it with everyone else in a way that anyone could understand. Someone can put their headphones on in the middle of the night and my pop song might help them make it through the night. I'm really proud to say that this is what I do for a living.³⁶

FADE MUSIC OUT

#CHRISTINE #

³⁶ All paraphrased from various interviews with Bjork that I have read over the years, now untraceable as a source.

PICKS UP A COPY OF HEAT MAGAZINE³⁷

CHRISTINE: My chakras are fucked. I can't bear it any more, AP. Even my reiki master won't be able to sort this one out. They are always there trying to get a photo of me without make-up on, or a photo of me with cellulite. Christine piles on the pounds. Next issue: Christine – scandalously skinny. I'm trying to create work of cultural significance. Three episodes a week.

Somebody told me that Gucci are really dodgy. The factory workers are injected with amphetamines and stuff to make them work harder. But have you seen those wittle baby shoes? Gucci baby stilettos. Sweet.

Just look at yesterday - outside Harvey Nicks. After lunch at The Ivy! Film launch at Leicester Square!! They're like animals.

SNAPS MAGAZINE ON TO FLOOR

DAVID: Stella says "but surely if you went to normal places. Nobody would try to take your photo down my betting shop."

CHRISTINE: They do afford those of us in the public eye a certain level of necessary exposure, purely to publicise one's work and charity... things. I feel so vulnerable, though. Especially after that pig sold his sex story to the Manchester Evening News. Christine gets a filling from her dentist... round the

³⁷ Heat magazine, Emap publishing (various dates)

back of the Little Chef in Stockport... kiddie's picnic area. Not true. It was on the climbing frame.

RECORDED VOICE:

CHRISTINE (RECORDED): It was never supposed to be like this. When I was at The Floella Benjamin school for Stage and Screen we used to act out scenes from the musicals. That's what I thought it would be like. Someone would always be there to catch me when I fall, like in the musicals. In the musicals.³⁸

RECORDED VOICE ENDS

CRYING SLOW

MUSIC: GLADYS KNIGHT'S *HELP ME MAKE IT THROUGH THE NIGHT*, WHICH SKITTERS AND JUMPS.

DAVID 'LIPSYNCHS' WITH MAGAZINE, THEN PERFORMS A SCORE OF PAPARAZZI MOVEMENTS WITH FLAHSBULB.

MUSIC ENDS

NICK#

SOUND:

PHONE RINGS and CLICKS.

³⁸ Quotation from Björk's *In The Musical*, used later in the show (Gudmundsdottir, 1996)

RECORDED VOICE

AP (ANSWERMACHINE): Hello, what fresh hell is this? Glamorous, chop chop, where do you want it tits or face? voicemail, call back, on pain of death – if I can be arsed.

NICK (RECORDED): AP? AP? Are you there? Answer the phone AP, It's Nick. I'm really sick of all of this, you silly bitch...

END OF RECORDED VOICE

MUSIC:

BARTOLI SINGING LA CENERENTOLA³⁹ [SAME TRACK AS RECORDED VOICE?]

NICK: She was a friend of my father. I never even knew her that well, anyway. So, I get there and everyone is being mawkish and sniffing into hankies. As if that wasn't bad enough, just as the coffin's sliding into the incinerator, they play a Bette fucking Midler song. I can't bear all that shit about just because it's popular it doesn't mean it's not a classic. Actually, my grandmother did make the point that at least it keeps the lines clear. WE listen to Cecilia Bartoli while they while away the hours with Charlotte Church. NQOCD... Not quite our class, darling.

DAVID FETCHES WIG

SFX - DIAL TONE AS CECILIA BARTOLI FADES OUT.

³⁹ Rossini (this recording, 1995)

HEADBANG

MUSIC - PORTISHEAD, SOUR TIMES ⁴⁰

DAVID HEADBANGS AND PLAYS AIR GUITAR.

MUSIC ENDS

VOGUE BUDDHISM CHAT

DAVID: It's very important to keep up with the latest trends.

MUSIC, HARP: [Disque, Tansman]⁴¹

PICKS UP A COPY OF VOGUE MAGAZINE⁴²

Shirts are back in. Black shirts, white shirts, coloured shirts. Mmm, perfume strip. Refreshing, youthful, fun...

GETS SOMEONE TO REMOVE GAFFA FROM HEAD

When I was a Samaritan I did a night shift and there was this old copy of Hello magazine with Jackie Collins on the cover. The interview said – this is true - "Jackie is suffering from cancer and is also manically depressed after the

⁴⁰ Portishead (1999)

⁴¹ From Laskin (1993)

⁴² Vogue magazine, Conde Nast Publishing (various dates)

split-up of her marriage... but despite it all she is looking fantastic for her age."⁴³

A long long time ago in a far far far away land called France, there was a mouse. A mouse with desires – cheese, acorns, cherries and limes, an iPod. It sounds funny to a lot of us, but some mice give desire a very bad press. It's a poison, a disease, a madness. Once the mouse had his iPod he wanted to upgrade it to one with a bigger hard-drive, that could download the pictures from the front of the album because then it's easier to much browse through them... anyway. Some mice said this desire was programmed into the twists of their DNA. It's in their nature to like cherries and limes and it's in their nature to want more and more and more. [PANTO VOICE] Oh no it's not. Oh yes it is. Oh no it's not. Another mouse, very wise, suggested that the way to happiness isn't to get what you want. It is to train yourself not to want it. She said 'you are only poor if you choose to be.'⁴⁴ The name of that wise mouse was Dolly Parton-Mouse. Double-barreled. She said there is no living in a body that is subject to desire, for it is like a blazing house. They simply had to get out, to jump over the wall and make a run for it.

MUSIC CROSS FADES WITH WHITNEY HOUSTOUN⁴⁵

PUTS ON BROWN WIG AND STYLES IT.

FASHION GODMOTHER

⁴³ A real quotation from Hello magazine, now untraceable as a source.

⁴⁴ Quotation from Parton, 1971

⁴⁵ Houston, 2000

KENNY [SCOTTISH ACCENT]: I LOVE YOU... Whitney Houstoun!⁴⁶ I loved you more when you were a proper gospel singer. I have this fantasy where I'm this big black man in one of those huge satin robes. I think royal blue would be the best for my complexion. Oh no, if I was black I wouldn't have my complexion.

I had this job recently. I'm a stylist, fashion stylist, and I had to do the clothes for this new singer – Shaneequa! Fantastic voice, soul covers (Gladys Knight, Aretha) – a bit too J.Lo for my liking, but whatever. Shaneequa's a fake name – a nom de plume. Should that be nom de microphone? Her real name's Gina, but I call her Miss Gina from Argentina. 'Cept she's no fae Argentina, she's from America.⁴⁷

GINA (SMOOTH BLACK AMERICAN ACCENT, WITH HISPANIC HINTS) It's like when you go to a club and a record comes on that's JUST the one EVERYONE needs to hear. I was in London when the police attacked Rodney King in LA. I went to Notting Hill Carnival and some DJ played that track by KRS-One that goes... *Woop-woop! That's the sound of da police! Woop-woop! That's the sound of the beast!*⁴⁸ ... the crowd erupted. All the political speeches, acres of newsprint, and then a rapper sums up how we all feel in two minutes.

⁴⁶ Reference to Miss Gina's opening line In The Shade

⁴⁷ Shaneequa and Miss Gina from Argentina, both references to In The Shade

⁴⁸ KRS-One, 1997

KENNY: I was styling her for the launch night and I'd chosen this really fabulous dress. Refreshing, youthful, fun. My inspiration was none other than the divine Miss Lena Horne when she's singing *Stormy Weather* and wearing that gorgeous dress that starts here and goes all the way down like this. She's like this, can hardly walk, but it looks fan-cock-sucking-tastic.

Before the launch, I went round to AP's, she's Miss Gina's manager. And... I met this woman - Stella. A right fucking state she looked and she was sort of nervous, but there was something made you feel dead relaxed and like you could pour your heart out. You could say 'I toss myself off while I fantasise about raping a vicar' and she'd probably just say 'Aye, I know what you mean.'

It was lovely to meet someone like that, especially after the year that I've had. I won't bore you with it. Wiping the dirt from his hands as he walked from the grave.⁴⁹ I just felt that she'd been through the mill too.

Stella, It's about time we found you a more glamorous outfit, girlfriend. You look a fucking state. You've got a few more curves than AP so you'll fill these out a bit better. Can you hear that AP? Stella's got a real woman's figure, a bit of meat on her bones. You need to take a leaf out of her book and eat a bit more cake.

AP: Oh shut up before I sodomise you with a broom handle.

⁴⁹ Quotation from McCartney, 1966

KENNY: I will my dear, because a new experience I relish.⁵⁰

STORMY WEATHER

SFX FADES IN: LOUD, HEAVY RAINFALL

MUSIC: LENA HORNE, STORMY WEATHER⁵¹

DAVID PUTS UP UMBRELLA AND WALKS ABOUT

MUSIC CROSS-FADES TO KRAFTWERK ELEANOR RIGBY⁵², EQ'D TO EMPHASISE BASS.

KENNY: (WALKS USC) Stella, allow me to introduce you to everyone. This is Linda Langoustine, she's a 'model'. Barbara Blachington is a journalist for... The Observer is it? Yes. And this is Lorenzo Cenerentola⁵³. He's the head of Streetcut Records, which is Miss Gina's record label.... Stella... Lorenzo... Long moment of meaningful eye contact...

GOSPEL

MUSIC:

ARETHA, ELEANOR RIGBY (LIVE)⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Self-reflexive reference back to my Aunt Maureen (p.2)

⁵¹ Horne, 1943

⁵² Untraceable bootleg remix of a Kraftwerk track combined with Eleanor Rigby.

⁵³ Cenerentola, Italian name for Cinderella. Also Rossini's Cinderella opera.

⁵⁴ Franklin, 1968

SLOW MOTION 'GOSPEL MOVES' WITH SOME OF THE CRYING MIXED IN.

MUSIC ENDS

HELP ME MAKE IT

PICKS UP MIC, DOES KENNY'S 'DRESS ACTION'

SHANEEQUA: [ON MIC] Thank you, lazy gemma. You're really a great audience. Let me just replenish my fluids [DRINKS WATER] Now, this next song has no instrumentation, just the voice. They call that Acapulco. I'm imagining a lot of happy people. Most of you are with someone you love, well you are the lucky ones. All over the world there are lots of people who are alone tonight. I imagine most of us have been in that situation at some time or another. I know I have. Recently I heard a most beautiful song with a dynamic lyric that really expresses this feeling of loneliness. It means a lot to me personally and I'd like to share it with you... I think you'll see what I mean....

(SINGS) Take the ribbon from my hair

Shake it loose and let it fall

Layin' soft against your skin

Like the shadow on the wall

Come and lay down by my side

Till the early mornin' light

All I'm takin' is your time
Help me make it through the night

I don't care what's right or wrong
and I won't try to understand
Let the devil take tomorrow
Lord, tonight I need a friend

Yesterday is dead and gone
And tomorrow's out of sight
And it's sad to be alone
Help me make it through the night

HUMS

Lord it's so sad to be alone
Help me make it through the night. Mm-hmm.
Come on and help me through the night. Mm-hmm.
Through... the... night

Thank you.

JOURNO

BARBARA: [IRISH ACCENT] That's something I come back to again and again in my award-winning column for the Observer. We don't always get what we want.... She was just trying to protect me. It's a human life in there. I don't think about her these days. My mother I mean, not the... you know. It's just that girl Shaneequa. Her voice reminded me. There's this song, I'm sure you'd recognise it. Love across the divide, love between different religions. I don't know if that's what the writer intended. It's a sin and we know it's wrong, but our love keeps coming on strong. My favourite bit is when she changes her mind. She says, 'you know what, I do not care if they find us, I just want you to hold me. Hold me baby. Hold me baby.

MUSIC: ARETHA'S DARK END OF THE STREET⁵⁵ FADES IN

DAVID SITS

MUSIC CROSS-FADES TO 'DO I LOOK LIKE A SLUT'⁵⁶

DOLLY BIRD

LINDA: I fucking LOVE this song.

PUTS ON BALLOON-BOOBS AND PARADES ABOUT, SITS ON BALL

MUSIC FADES TO LOWER LEVEL

I tell you. She was well fat. Like a pig, you know. I wouldn't have minded, right, but there was paparazzzzi there wanted to take my picture, right, and

⁵⁵ Franklin (1994, this release)

⁵⁶ Avenue D, 2003

this fat old moose comes and sits down at our table. Silly fat fucking bitch was like staring at everything like she's never been in a fucking club before. I wouldn't have minded, right, but she sat next to Lorenzo who is, like, my bloke, you know. They is chatting away with each other like they is old mates. I wouldn't have minded, right, but she ain't fucking even a fucking blonde. I can't believe it

MUSIC FADES OUT COMPLETELY

I got every man in the country desperate to get a sniff at my snatch and my own bloke's sitting talking to a fucking hippo. I tell you, if the papparazzzi wasn't there I'd a knocked her teeth out through her gash.

DISCO HUMILIATION

KENNY: It all depends which table they give you. I've seen fist fights break over whether they're in the VIP section or not. Stella says 'What's the VIP section like.' It's just like the rest of the club... but with a little rope around it. Let's dance!

DANCE MUSIC ⁵⁷

STELLA: You know I love disco dancing. I haven't done it in front of anyone for years, not since school discos. I've never really liked being looked at. But

⁵⁷ S'il Vous Plait by Fantastic Plastic Machine, 1998

Kenny had dressed me up and given me a bit of make-up, so I was feeling quite confident. I must have been a bit drunk, because I let Kenny push me up onto a podium. There I was in my frock, boogying away in front of everyone. About twenty people turned round and watched with big smiles on their faces. Kenny was shouting out 'go Stella, go Stella'.

The woman that I'd met earlier, with the boobs, got up on the podium too. Apparently she was a dancer in rap videos and you could really see it, she was really good. The DJ called out her name on the microphone. They turned a light on her and the audience all cheered. I thought it was best to get down and give her the limelight... I needed the loo anyway.

AP JOB OFFER

SFX: CHOPPING COKE ON COMPACT

AP: Stella, darling, you are a big hit with everyone. I need someone like you... No, not to clean the house. AP needs a PA! And I don't mean a typist... I mean someone who can get on with everyone, but still have their head screwed on, especially round this kind of nonsense. You're like a flower growing in the mud, Stella.⁵⁸ Please say yes... Don't let me pressure you. We'll chat in the morning.

⁵⁸ Reference to Buddhist chant nam yo ho rengo kyo

In the meantime, though, you seem to be getting on rather famously with Lorenzo Cenerentola. He's quite a dish isn't he? That page three girl he goes with - spitting feathers. It's making the rest of us hoot.

SNORTS COKE FROM COMPACT.

FLOUR LOTUSES

MUSIC: BJORK IN THE MUSICALS⁵⁹

FLOUR LOTUSES WITH STENCILS

MUSIC ENDS

MAGIC REALISM CHAT

DAVID: AP was right, Stella and Lorenzo were getting on pretty well. So well, in fact, that he offered to take her home. The walls melted away and Stella floated up into the air.

MUSIC – ZITHER.

A neon orange London cab sailed into view. The door was opened by a big old mouse in a clown costume and a gorgeous little pair of Gucci baby

⁵⁹ Gudmudsdottir, 2000

stilettos. (KNEELS) Stella asked what the shoes were doing on his feet. The mouse replied, "Why, they're taking me from day to evening." Stella Ashputtle and Lorenzo Cenerentola, Mr big record producer, got into the cab and it sailed into the sky, leaving behind them a trail of pumpkin-coloured glitter .

MUSIC CROSS FADES WITH YAZOO, MIDNIGHT⁶⁰

IN THE CAB

SONG:*Midnight, it's raining outside yeah, it must be soaking wet. Everyone is sleeping tight. God knows I've tried my best, but....*

MUSIC FADES DOWN TO A MURMUR.

LORENZO (SCOTTISH, SITTING ON FLOOR): You have to understand that there are lots of women who would like to get involved with a man like me. The women who sort of groom themselves to be trophy wives. It's not very nice when you think about it. They put so much effort into looking good. Wearing that face that they keep in a jar by the door.⁶¹ It never occurs to them that someone might want them to sound good. To be interesting. It wasn't supposed to be like this. I'm earning a fortune but spending it all on a house which I'm never in because I'm working all the time to pay the mortgage. I go to the sort of parties where when the photographers go home, so do all the guests. And then you go home by yourself and have marmite on toast. That's what got me about her first of all, she wasn't trying to impress me, she wasn't

60 Yazoo, 1999 (this release)

61 Quotation from McCartney, 1966

trying to be someone she wasn't. She's a good-looking woman, but she's a big woman and she's older than a lot of the women there. And she's fine with it. She's not shitting herself about getting wrinkles and banging on about having botox injections in her 'front bottom'.

MUSIC FADES AWAY VERY SLOWLY TO NOTHING

When we got in the cab, she said 'are you sure? cabs cost a fortune. I'm sure I could get a nightbus.' I don't care about the money, but that gave me a real little thrill. It's the first time I can think of in years, really years, that I've been out with a woman who was more concerned about *saving* my money than spending it.

MAGIC VOICE: And then Mr Big Record Producer had a vision, a vision of the future. Stella was the antidote. They would spend many days together and many nights. Many nights and many days. He needed to let go of his cheese and acorns, and limes and cherries. [THINKING] Maybe he would keep the iPod. No, he needed to let go and have a bloody good laugh. Hee hee ho ho ha ha. Love would be a nice, too. It had taken this curvy, down-to-earth woman to save him from his own life. It was like a blazing house. Stella was like a principal boy in long leather boots and hotpants. She had hoisted him over the wall and together they were making a run for it.

GOODNIGHT

MUSIC - IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE ⁶²

STELLA: He felt really warm and he smelled lovely. I was a bit embarrassed and so I looked out of the window. I thought I could see stars outside the windows, but they were streetlights. We were floating really high above them, It freaked me out a bit. We flew for a long, long time and saw all sorts of things. A break in the white clouds and there was a lake with cherries and limes and lotus flowers. I could smell them. He got closer and closer, keeping me warm while the wind whipped all around us. Eventually the carpet floated down, landed on my doorstep soft as you like. He asked if he could see me again. I said 'alright, what about tomorrow?' and that was that. I never knew it was so easy.

MUSIC very SLOWLY FADES OUT

STELLA: And then he held me in his arms, like this, and he looked at me and looked at me. Then he kissed me. He kissed me. We both smiled, and then he said... Goodnight.

(GET CYMBALS) Goodnight.

DAVID CLINKS CYMBALS

SNAP B.O.

⁶² Umebayashi, 2000

CURTAIN CALL

MUSIC - ARETHA'S ELEANOR RIGBY, FOLLOWED LATER BY JOHN HOLT'S HELP ME MAKE IT THROUGH THE NIGHT.⁶³

⁶³ Holt, (2002, this release)

AS THE AUDIENCE LEAVE THEY ARE GIVEN SMALL CARDS WITH ONE OF THE FOLLOWING TEXTS (THEY CAN COMPARE DIFFERENT CARDS IN THE BAR) :

After **Stella's Dad** died his wish came true. His spirit was transferred into the body of the elderly Pakistani grandmother next door. He ate samosas, naan and pakora until dying a second-time around from a cholesterol-related heart attack.

After turning Stella away from the temp agency, South African **Charmaine** went for lunch at Prêt à Manger and choked on a pine nut in her avocado salad wrap with French dressing (no mayo). She was given the kiss of life by an Afro-haired tourist named LaToya Levine.

Christine remained popular in her soap opera role for several years, after which she toured the country in *Love Me Slender* with Lorraine Chase and Bella Emberg (a.k.a. 'the fat one from Russ Abbott'). She consistently denied rumours of alcoholism. Her fame reached its height when flashed her tits and sicked up on the microphone whilst presenting the Spectacle Wearer of the Year Award to Michael Portillo.

Nick was divorced by A.P. He later fell madly in love with a dental hygienist from Doncaster. His obscenely wealthy grandmother had a heart attack at the wedding when forced to dance to *Come On Eileen*. She died in the ambulance. Opera diva Cecilia Bartoli performed at her funeral, singing *Wind Beneath My Wings*.

A.P married **Simon** and walked down the aisle to a harp arrangement of *Smack my Bitch Up*. She later set up shop as a foul-mouthed dominatrix named Mistress Pussywhip and became infamous when it was revealed that a legendary presenter of wildlife programmes regularly drank her piss. She made a fortune with her kiss-and-tell memoir *Having a Whip Round* and retired to grow purple sprouting broccoli in Devon.

Whilst working on a fashion shoot in New York, **Kenny** found true love with a closeted Baptist preacher who was then inspired to come out. Together they now run the *Gospel Choir of Queens, Queens* and move with the spirit every Sunday night. They have never agreed on what colour robes best suit their respective complexions.

Barbara Blachington published an emotionally devastating best-selling memoir about being reunited with her long-lost daughter, a street whore and crack addict in Belfast. Her daughter later sued for defamation, saying that she is actually a web-based financial analyst living in Sligo. Barbara now writes a regular column for the Dundee Courier.

On the way home from Miss Gina's launch party, **Linda Langoustine** gave her limo driver the blowjob of his life (quite literally), causing him to crash the car. He died immediately. Her enormous silicone breasts acted as airbags, but she lost both her legs above the knee. Finding that Heather Mills had already cornered the market in celebrity amputees she slipped into obscurity. She now works as a teaching assistant in Woking and is more fulfilled than in her previous job.

Despite having one massive hit single, the pop career of **Shaneequa** (aka **Miss Gina**) ground to a halt. She gave it up, moved to Scotland and became a Buddhist nun. Later she released a relaxation CD of gospel-style Tibetan chants called *Chill Out, Sister!* The royalties raised enough money to set up a soup kitchen in Glasgow where she regularly helps people make it through the night.

PRESET –

mic stand & mic, on stage

barstool on rostra

LATOYA'S RECORDED INTRO

MALE VOICE Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to Streatham's premiere lap-dancing venue... Legs Eleven. It's our pleasure to introduce the world's only psychic soul sister... LaToya Levine, the toast of Queens.¹

PAUSE, KNOCKING AT DOOR

Open the fucking door

WAIT UNTIL AUDIENCE ANSWER IT

(Russell prompt them if necessary)

ROLLS IN ON WHEELCHAIR, LEAVES NEAR DOOR

[UNDER BREATH] For fuck sake

FALLS INTO TRANCE

RESPECT ²

DANCES TO STAGE

What you want baby I got

What you need

You know I got it

All I'm askin' is for a little respect

When you come home

¹ Allusion to drag icon Bette Midler's 1970s cabaret character wheelchair-bound Delores Delago, the toast of Chicago (Midler, 1980)

² We perform the version (and particularly the fast tempo) of the live Filmore version (Franklin 1968)

I'm out to give you all my money
But all I'm askin in return honey
Is to give me my propers
When you get home
Yeah, baby, when you get home

I ain't gonna do you wrong while you gone
I ain't gonna do you wrong
'Cause I dont wanna
All I'm askin' is for a little respect
When you come home
Baby, when you come home

INTSTRUMENTAL BREAK
DANCES TO C.S. ROSTRA

Ooh, your kisses, sweeter than honey
But guess what, so here's my money
All I want you to do for me
Is give me some respect when you get home
Yeah, baby, when you get home

R-E-S-P-E-C-T
Find out what it means to me
R-E-S-P-E-C-T
Take out TCP
sock-it-to-me, sock-it-to-me, sock-it-to-me, sock-it-to-me, sock-it-to-me,

DANCES BACK TO STAGE

Good evening. Hello. Hi.³ For those of you who do not read, attend the theatre, listen to non-commercial radio programmes or know anything of the world in which you live it is perhaps necessary for me to introduce myself⁴... My name is LaToya Levine, the toast of Queens. I am thrilled that so many of my die-hard fans have pitched up tonight. I knew that you had never really deserted me.

Ladies and gentlemen, hold the front page. I am the world's only psychic soul sister. You know what that means? It means I am plugged in to the divas of the netherworld. They send their spirit out and into me, in a shamanistic ritual. Even as I speak to you, I am connected to the psychic soul hotline. And I'm not talking bout no dial-up 56k, no sir. This is your bona-fide broadband connection psychic soul partay. Fasten your seatbelts, it's going to be a bumpy night⁵ because I feel the spirits strongly tonight!

Tonight, I'm gonna ask you to do just one thing. Relax, loan us your soul to us for a few minutes⁶, I promise you'll get it back tenfold.

MOVES AWAY FROM MIC AS MUSIC FADES

It was a zombie jamboree
Took place in a New York cemetery⁷

(MUTTERING) Channeling the spirits. Channeling. Step into the light, there is peace and serenity in the light.⁸ Mystic Meg, motherfucker.

FIRST MEETING (DELROY)

³ Quotation in both text and performance style from same song in Franklin 1968

⁴ Quotation from the character Addison De Witt in *All about Eve* (Mankiewicz, 1950)

⁵ Quotation from the character Margo Channing in *All About Eve* (Mankiewicz, 1950)

⁶ Quotation in both text and performance style from same song in Franklin 1968, also a self-reflexive reference to *On The Edge* and *Through The Night*.

⁷ Quotation from calypso song *Zombie Jamboree*, as later released by Rockapella, 2001.

⁸ Quotation from the midget psychic in *Poltergeist* (Hooper, 1982)

LOOKS DOWN AT SELF, PAUSE

She doesn't just channel the singers. She channels me. She'd rather not, but that the thing with psychics, you send your spirit into their body and it's not really the done thing for them to say no. Anyway, you know what The Fridge is like on a Saturday night. It's really hot and funky and full of men all having a good time. This particular night there was a live PA. Some diva singing along to a backing track. I was blown away. It was LaToya Levine. My mum used to have her records in the seventies. It's weird looking back on it because my mum is the least cool person you could meet in the world. She's an academic from Uganda.

And there she was all these years later singing a tribute to Sylvester - You Make Me Feel Mighty Real⁹. I would be lying if I said the years have been kind to her. She looked like Kelly Osbourne. Certainly she's put on weight. I mean, I like a big woman so it's not a problem. But I tell you, Heat magazine would have to do a pull-out centre spread to fit her arse on.

I went to the dressing room, well toilet actually. 'Excuse me, Miss Levine? I wonder if I could have your autograph?'¹⁰ She wrote [ON MIC, LATOYA VOICE] To Delroy – Everything I do, I do it for my fans. They made me who I am.¹¹ Love, love and love¹², LaToya Levine. We went to the bar and she bought me a drink and then another drink and another drink. She said to me 'I love the look you're working. So street, so ghetto. Refreshing, youthful, fun'¹³ [CHUCKLES]. I think I've always been attracted to... BBWs they call them in the personal ads – big, beautiful women.

She said 'I can't bear to be alone tonight. Let the devil take tomorrow, for tonight I need a friend'¹⁴. I thought it was a line until we got back to her place

⁹ Sylvester, 1978.

¹⁰ Allusion to the narrative of *All About Eve*. (Mankiewicz, 1950)

¹¹ Quotation from singer Brandi in *VH1 Divas* concert film (Houston, Cher, Turner, Brandi, 1999)

¹² Allusion to Sandra Bernhard's book of the same name (1993) which is itself a quotation from Fellini's film *La Dolce Vita*.

¹³ Self-reflexive reference to Kenny in *Through The Night*.

¹⁴ Quotation from song *Help Me Make It Through The Night* (Knight, 1972) as well as reference to *Through The Night*.

and there was a massage table laid out with a big shawl and underneath was her dead pet monkey.¹⁵ [WALKS ACROSS TO WHEELCHAIR, IN FRONT OF DOORS] She lives in this disused strip joint in Streatham and the wind whistles through and sounds like an old church organ.¹⁶ The main room has got a stage in the corner where she practices her act every night in front of the empty tables. The other room is round peep show room with slots all around for men to look through, and that's where she has her round bed with leopard-print satin sheets. You know it's deserted, but you can't get rid of that feeling of being watched. The general atmosphere is very Macbeth-ish.¹⁷ In the dead of night, she got out of bed and went out to the grass verge round the back and buried the monkey there.¹⁸

WHITNEY (GINA)

[TURNS CHAIR AND SITS IN IT]

Pero chica mi amiga. Que dice! Esto es yo. Esto es yo y como hablo. Y hablo a si, y hablo a si contigo¹⁹. I love you Whitney Hyooostone. In the history of soul music there has never been a more beautiful, more talented crack-addicted lesbian. It's not right, but it IS okay²⁰, Whitney. I salute you, senora, for remaining true to your roots, for not turning your back on the church [CROSSES SELF]. I defend you from all those second rate bitches who steal your style, then behind your back they say 'Whitney is a washed up old spunkrag. Then they call you Shitney Poostain.

DELROY'S TALENT

[HE PICKS UP 4 CANDLES FROM TABLES NEAREST ROSTRA AND PUTS THEM ON BAR STOOL DURING THE FOLLOWING]

I can't really remember how it came about, but I told her that I made music. I did piano when I was a kid. Child prodigy and all that. I auditioned for Juilliard

¹⁵ Allusion to the narrative of *Sunset Boulevard* (Wilder, 1950)

¹⁶ Quotation from character Joe Gillis in *Sunset Boulevard*, referring to Norma Desmond's mansion.

¹⁷ Quotation from *All About Eve* (Mankiewicz, 1950), also reference to all the Macbeth quotations in *On The Edge*.

¹⁸ Allusion to *Sunset Boulevard* narrative.

¹⁹ Quotation from song *Kisses On The Wind* (Cherry, 1989)

²⁰ Reference to song of the same name (Houston, 2000)

but I didn't get in. My mum said it was racism, but I don't think so.²¹ I went to De Montfort uni instead, Del Monte I call it, and did business studies. Now I've good a good job doing supply chain management for Top Shop. I still do music, though, experimental electronic stuff. Stockhausen-inspired. When I was at sixth form I had his name written on my canvas bag. I like all that early stuff where he chopped up tapes. All the atonal, arrhythmic stuff²². I played LaToya a couple of tracks and she went mental for it. She said - all these years I've been needing to relaunch my career, waiting for a major new talent [he points at himself] The new Ray Charles, she said. No, no, no. The new Stevie Wonder. Wait, wait, wait. The new... Puff Daddy! I didn't have the heart to tell her that I would rather be the new Xenakis.²³

PARIS IS BURNING

I remember seeing this documentary years ago called Paris is Burning²⁴ and it was all about the Vogueing balls in 1980s New York, the Black drag queens who started it all off before Madonna ripped them off. There are voguing competitions between gangs called 'houses' – like fashion houses. 'My name is Pepper La Baija, mother of the House of La Baija'.

As well as the voguing there are contests or 'realness,' which is like fancy dress, only more serious. You have to dress up in particular categories and pass yourself off as realistically as possible. There's executive realness, pimp realness, glamour realness. The atmosphere is like a cock fight. They scream and shout at each other, try to get people disqualified. *Excuse me this category is pimp realness, but this number is wearing a woman's fur coat, girlfriend.... [ANGRILY] The buttons are on the right-hand side! Do not throw shade on to me, Miss Thing.*

I remember this big middle-aged white drag queen called Dorian Corey. She isn't a member of any one house, but tries to be a diplomat between warring

²¹21 Allusion to the life of Nina Simone (as described in Hampton and Nathan, 2004)

²²22 Self-reflexive reference to the musical arrangements in the show, with their use of musique-concrete, sampling and so on.

²³23 Allusion to the narrative of *Sunset Boulevard* (Wilder, 1950) where Norma Desmond asks Joe Gillis to help her relaunch her career.

²⁴24 Livingstone, 1994.

houses. She has this wonderful calm presence, sort of drag queen Buddhist nun. 'Life's hard, what are you gonna do. It's like a blazing house. You simply have to get out. To jump over the wall and make a run for it.'²⁵

LATOYA'S BACK STORY Pt 1

[MOVES CANDLES AND SITS ON STOOL]

It began many years ago, ladies and gentlemen. More years than I care to remember and more years than I am able to remember. I was born Eleanor Fagin²⁶. Picture this- A southern Baptist church. My father - the preacher, famed throughout the country for his rousing and spirited sermons. [OUT INTO AUDIENCE] *Did I move with the spirit? Did you move with the spirit? Did you move with the spirit in the dark? Did you move with the spirit in the light? Did you move with the spirit on the bus on the way to work when you asked your supervisor to put you on an early shift?* [SQUEEZES FACE OF AUDIENCE MEMBER] *Oh, you got that anointing on you!*

He was a big star of the Baptist circuit. He would tour around the country giving sermons and the whole family would follow. So, you see it's in my blood. I was singing and shining a light from the cradle. At the age of fourteen I was already doing solos at the front of the church, singing and playing the piano.²⁷ *Does anybody mind if I just moan a little while? Go ahead. Mmmmmmmmm. Mmmmmmmmmmm. Ain't no harm to moan.*²⁸ But things between me and Daddy didn't go so good. [WALK TO STAGE] He was too strict and I was too free and creative a spirit. So, I ended up singing in the street for nickels and dimes. Then I ended up hooking in the streets for fives and tens. I'm sure that you've all been in the same situation.

PRIVATE DANCER ²⁹

²⁵ Not a quotation from *Paris is Burning* but a reference to the Buddhist axiom used in *Through The Night*.

²⁶ Eleanor Fagin was Billie Holliday's real name (Umbrella Music, 2001)

²⁷ Baptist preacher narrative is a reference to the life of Aretha Franklin.

²⁸ Quotation from *Aretha Gospel* (Franklin, 1956) recorded in her father's church when she was fourteen.

²⁹ Turner, 1984

REMOVE LAYER OF CLOTHES IN INTRO

All the men come in these places
And the men are all the same
You don't look at their faces
And you don't ask their names
You don't think of them as human
You don't think of them at all
You keep your mind on the money
Keeping your eyes on the wall

I'm your private dancer, a dancer for money
I'll do what you want me to do
I'm your private dancer, a dancer for money
And any old music will do

I want to make a million dollars
I wanna live out by the sea
Have a husband and some children
Yeah, I guess I want a family
All the men come in these places
And the men are all the same
You don't look at their faces
And you don't ask their names

I'm your private dancer, a dancer for money
I'll do what you want me to do
I'm your private dancer, a dancer for money
And any old music will do

Deutschmarks or dollars
American Express will do nicely, thank you

Let me loosen up your collar
Tell me, do you wanna see me do the shimmy again?

GOES TO WHEELCHAIR AND LAP DANCES

Tina, you are a private dancer, you are a soul survivor, you are simply the best.³⁰ Deserted by your family at a tender age. Trapped in bonded labour by Ike Turner you were beaten, raped and mentally abused. You managed to leave him only when you were strengthened by your newfound Buddhist faith and advice from Cher.³¹ Meanwhile, Mick Jagger had founded a career on stealing your moves, but you became the biggest selling solo singer of all time. Apart from Mariah and Celine and Madonna, but they are white so what can you expect

I'm your private dancer, a dancer for money
I'll do what you want me to do
I'm your private dancer, a dancer for money
And any old music will do

MISS GINA'S BACK STORY PT 1

[SITS IN CHAIR, WHEELS TOWARDS STAGE]

Okay, Senora Cosa. You wanna know the autentico? The story of mi vida loca! Ha! Me and Miss LaToya Levine, we go way back. Si claro. We worked the hot streets in Miami together. We turned tricks with these fighting toothless bitches. We would do this fake Spanish-speaking routine together. Pero chica, mi amiga que dice!. You looking for a date, guapo? You looking for a something a little bit loca? Those fighting bitches, my sisterwomen, were like blood to me. Nobody more so than LaToya Levine. I learnt a lot from her. She had this trick she could do where she got a big hammer [OPENS LEGS]... anyway.

³⁰ All three are the title of Turner songs – *Private Dancer*, *Soul Survivor* and *Simply The Best*

³¹ All taken from Turner and Loder, 1986.

She did lend me the money to get my tits, but I more than paid her back when I got back to the streets. I was earning enough money from ‘the sporting life’³² to enrol in the university. Women’s Studies. I was the star of the fucking class, grade A little bitch. The teachers couldn’t get enough of this fine sister. I was like a living fucking case study for them, senora.

Me and LaToya and this other girl Delores we used to sing to pass the time on the corner. We used to make up songs for a laugh. Like this

JUMPS ON STAGE, TO MIC

[WEAK VOICE] ‘Hey girlfriend’ – is LaToya

[STRONG VOICE] ‘whassup Miss Thing’ – is me.

[WEAK] ‘How was that trick you turned just now – did he drop his load’

[STRONG] ‘You know it’s true, girlfriend, he came like a firehose and it’s still in my haaaaaaair’

Then one day this guy picked us up together and we go this alleyway with him and he pays us real good money... to sing. Es muy autentico, senora.

He met Marmalade down in old new Orleans

Struttin her stuff on the street

She said ‘hello, hey joe, you wanna give it a go? Mm-mm’³³

He loved us. He was a manager and wanted to set us up as a band. And he’s good, you know, he gets us a huge record contract and our first song is a big, big hit – My Boy Lollipop.³⁴ So, I drop out of the women’s studies degree. All my teachers are moaning and crying. Don’t go into the music industry, Gina. You gonna get exploited! It’s worse than the streets. Look at poor Billie Holliday. I said Billie Who?

³² Reference to Galás song of same name (Galás, 1994)

³³ From *Lady Marmalade*, performed by Labelle, 1971.

³⁴ Actually a hit for Millie Small in 1964.

Our group is called The Skylarks³⁵, cos we like songbirds. People loved us, and particularly they loved me. I got the most fan mail. The third girl I told you about, Delores. She wants to have a baby so she leaves and we replace her with a girl called DeeDee. But the schedule is, like, really really hectic and she gets pneumonia and dies. Then a girl name Delizique can't take the trouble between me and LaToya and developed paranoid schizophrenia. [SITS IN CHAIR AGAIN] We never could find a good third girl.

LATOYA'S BACK STORY pt. 2

[JUMP OUT OF CHAIR AND UP ON STAGE]

Eventually working the streets, I realised that I was a much better singer than I was a petty criminal, so me and some other girls set up a trio called The Skylarks, because we were all songbirds you see. People loved us and particularly, they loved me. I got the most fan mail. But it was hard work. Joe, the manager, pushed us. We would do these ninety day tours with, like, three days off. Then a week at home rehearsing, then off for another ninety day tour with only two days off.³⁶ And the fans expect you to look good and be a star twenty four seven three six five.

Things went downhill. I became an addict. Poke chops, ribs, Hershey bars, heroin. The shows were a mess. Dirty needles all over the piano. Leftovers falling out of the bottom of my skirt. My relationship with Joe-the-manager starts going badly too. We had been seeing each other on and off but he was real possessive.³⁷ Then one time, I traded my purple mink coat and matching muff for 21 grams of Caramac. He broke my wrist. I blamed myself. I felt I had driven him to it. One time he stuck a lit cigarette up my nose. Another time he beat me so hard before going on stage that I was singing with a broken jaw and blood coming in the my mouth. I had to swallow it down in the instrumental breaks. This went on for years. One day, strengthened by my newfound Buddhist faith, I got up and left that motherfucker. Two hours before

³⁵ Actually the name of Miriam Makeba's group (Makeba and Hall, 1988)

³⁶ Typical tour schedule for the Ike and Tina Turner revue as described by Tina Turner (Turner and Loder, 1986)

³⁷ Reference to Diana Ross's relationship with the manager of The Supremes.

we were due to open at the Parisian room³⁸ in LA, I walked out on my husband and my career.³⁹ One of the roadies took pity on me and helped me to make a dash for it in a purple Luton van. I had nothing.

I was lucky that the *ganguro* craze had just kicked off in Japan. Ganguro, ganguro. This is where Japanese girls idolise Black American women to such a degree that they try to look like them by going on the sunbed for days at a time and taking pills to darken their skin.⁴⁰ But you know the fickle nips. Soon, even those gigs dried up and I was on food stamps, living in a squat. [WALK TO CORNER ROSTRA] I spent my days taking care of my beauty regime, mud masks to cleanse my pores. I was washed up.

SEX LIVES EXPLAINED (DELROY)

[SIT ON STOOL, CORNER ROSTRA]

It was good that we clicked sexually. There's nothing worse than when you meet somebody, you say to them - why don't we do so-and-so and they are just really not into it. The thing that I was most relieved about is that she wanted to top *me*. You know, being a big black man people have these ideas that you're always a top, you'd run a mile about the idea of having something up your arse. I think it's that bad buck, slave rapist thing.⁴¹ Also, she was nice and rough.⁴² First thing she does is push me down on the bed. Do what I say and you won't get hurt. I said – what if I want to get hurt? She smiled this really sexy smile and then went very stern 'Get on your knees, my little bitch.' It was really sweet, actually. I love it when a woman takes control of me like that. I love it.

She lubed me up and got inside me. We're all friends here so I can tell you that she was riding me really fucking hard. There were points where I thought I was going to pass out but I kept it together. Please Mistress LaToya, stick it in my mancunt hard. Call me a dirty little whore, mistress. You're a dirty little

³⁸ Reference to the fictional supper club in Sandra Bernhard's *Without You I'm Nothing*, 1990

³⁹ Violence, Buddhism all specific references to life of Tina Turner. (Turner and Loder, 1986)

⁴⁰ Ganguro craze is not something that I made up (as many audiences presumed) See 'Ganguro' wikipedia entry [online].

⁴¹ Reference to Bogle, 1973.

⁴² Quotation from Tina Turner's intro to *Proud Mary* performed later in the show (1971)

whore? 'Mistress, call me... a nigger.... Nigger. Jigaboo bitch. You can't get enough of it, can you little darkie slut? I said please mistress, please stop. You're not wearing a rubber Johnny. You're going to cum up my sloppy hole and give me AIDS as a punishment for being a black mammy cumslut.

Do you want me to stop?

No, I've never had such a good fuck in my life.

If you want to stop, say 'cauliflower'

'cauliflower?'

Say 'cauliflower?' and I'll stop...

... RAPE. Help me. She says 'wouldn't you rather get the bug from from me than someone else?'. You know you're gonna get it in due time. We're all gonna die and die like flies. I don't trust you any more. You keep on saying 'go slow'⁴³. I said yes mistress, I want you to give me the bug as a gift. And then she came inside me. It was beautiful.

HINTS OF STALKING 1 - SALOME (DELROY)

When we got back to the place, there was graffiti across the wall and door and window. It's strange because the strip joint is disused and you'd never know that anyone lives there. To get to the entrance you have to walk along a long alleyway and then round the back and up a fire escape. *Fuck you Salome*. Salome like the bible. It was written in shite. There was so much of it that it must have been human. They must have done it in advance and brought it with them. All she said was [STAND] 'Salome. What a woman. What a part. A princess in love with a holy man. She dances the dance of the seven veils. He rejects her so she lays his head on a golden tray kissing his cold dead lips.'⁴⁴

LAZY GEMMA (LATOYA)

[WALK THROUGH TABLES]

⁴³ Quotation from Nina Simone's *Mississippi Goddam* (1964)

⁴⁴ Quotation in both text and performance style from *Sunset Boulevard* (Wilder, 1950) where Norma aims to film her own version of *Salome*.

You know what Chaka Khan is like – such a stickler for good grammar and clear diction. In the bad old days, when I was a druggist, my diction was very poor. I remember performing one night and Chaka Khan was in the audience. Afterwards she asked me – Who IS Lazy Gemma? I had no idea what she talking about. Lazy Gemma? Then she did me. She was copying my voice, stealing my style, everything. Good evening, Lazy Gemma. Thank you, lazy gemma. Cheeky cunt

HINTS OF STALKING 2 – FAG SMOKE

[SNIFF – THEN GATHER CANDLES FROM TABLES S.L. OF STAGE AND STRIKE UNDER STAGE]

Then I noticed the smell. I couldn't place it at first, but then I realised that it was fag smoke. I haven't smoked a cigarette in my whole life and LaToya told me she gave up years ago to look after her voice. Maybe she's started again, 'cause she is well stressed. Listen to me, 'well stressed'

DELROY'S ACCENT

My Dad was always saying to me 'Do not talk like that, Delroy. We did not send you to elocution lessons so that you can sound like street urchin.' I was good at my elocution lessons. I could do the voice. [switches to RP] I can do it now for you if you like. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. You see, it's really not that difficult. [switches back] But I didn't want to sound like that. I wanted to sound like the other kids I went to school with. You know, there weren't that many Black kids in the playground in Southend.

NINA (LATOYA)

ON STAGE, ON MIC

I've always relied on Nina Simone to keep me safe from harm. With the song *Don't Smoke in Bed*⁴⁵ she pioneered the notion of song-based safety advice. She followed it later with the lesser-known *Don't Run With Scissors*, the seminal *Never Leave A Burning Candle Unattended* and the haunting and

⁴⁵ Simone, 1964

mellifluous classic *One Opened Consume In Seven Days*.

REMOVE LAYER OF CLOTHING

Sometimes Nina Simone would bound on to the stage full of life and energy. Other times, the struggle for black civil rights wore her ass paper thin. She would slope on in a fur coat with a pair of reebok trainers, carrying her beloved Tesco bag.⁴⁶ Nina was a woman of many moods, a woman of many voices.

Nina Smooth ... I dedicate it to the Black students here at Berkeley. It's called To Be Young, Gifted And Black.⁴⁷

Nina Bleak... Can't get close to nobody no more. Because Today is a killer, today is a killer.⁴⁸

Nina Threatening ... This tune is called Mississippi Goddam! And I mean every word of it.⁴⁹

Nina Haranguing ... NO! I say my baby just cares for and you call out high-tone-places as loud as you can get it. Now let's start it all over again. My baby just cares for?... LOUDER... My baby just cares for. ALRIGHT!⁵⁰

Nina Mean... Asking me kill them now or later. Asking me kill them now or later.⁵¹

And finally Nina Fucked ... I forgot the next verse. I forgot it. I really did. Oh wait, I've got it now.⁵²

⁴⁶ A scenario described to me by several people who saw Simone play live.

⁴⁷ Quotation from spoken intro to *Young, Gifted and Black* on the album *Black Gold*, 1970.

⁴⁸ Quotation from *My Sweet Lord / Today Is A Killer* on the album *Emergency Ward*, 1972.

⁴⁹ Quotation from *Mississippi Goddam* on the album *Nina Simone in Concert*, 1964.

⁵⁰ Quotation from live performance of *My Baby Just Cares For Me* on the album *Live and Kicking* (1987).

⁵¹ Quotation from Simone's version of Kurt Weill's *Pirate Jenny*, 1964

⁵² Quotation from *Go Limp* on the album *Nine Simone in Concert*, 1964.

MY BABY JUST CARES FOR ME⁵³

DURING INTRO, DASHES TO ROSTRA AND STRUGGLES BACK WITH BAR STOOL.

My baby don't care for shows
My baby don't care for clothes
My baby just cares for me
My baby don't care for cars and races
My baby don't care for high-tone places

Liz Taylor is not his style
And even Lana Turner's smile
Is somethin' he can't see
My baby don't care who knows
My baby just cares for me

GYMNASTIC RIBBON ROUTINE DURING INSTRUMENTAL BREAK, USING A TOILET ROLL.

Baby, my baby don't care for shows
And he don't even care for clothes
He cares for me
My baby don't care
For cars and races
My baby don't care for
He don't care for high-tone places

Liz Taylor is not his style
And even Leonard Cohen's smile
Is something he can't see
Is something he can't see

⁵³ Simone, 1957.

| |
|--|
| I wonder what's wrong with baby My baby just cares for He just says his prayers for My baby just cares for me |
|--|

BACK ON THE ROAD (DELROY)

CLEAR UP TOILET ROLL.

So we went back on the road. It was lots of small gigs in pubs and working mens clubs. I wasn't really 'on the road' because I was still doing my job, so I would get there as soon as I could after work. One night this delivery of boho peasant frocks went missing in India. The music was all pre-recorded on backing tracks so LaToya didn't *need* me to be there. But when I called her to say I couldn't come, she went absolutely mental. When I got home she was already there. LaToya doesn't miss performances. If she can walk, crawl or roll then she plays⁵⁴, but she had cancelled the gig.

ENTER SHANEEQUA (DELROY)

HE PUSHES WHEELCHAIR TOWARDS C.S. ROSTRA

This particular woman would come to every show. She was easy to spot because of her huge afro. She would wait outside the stage door, but when LaToya came out she would be gone. One day I spoke to her and she told me that she was a huge fan of LaToya, that she checked in the papers for every appearance that LaToya made.⁵⁵ Her name was Shaneequa. I invited her back home so she could meet LaToya and she was really nervous. Kept saying that LaToya was a living legend, that Shaneequa didn't deserve to be in the presence of such a great talent. She said she was feeling nauseous and could go to the loo. I was about to tell her 'It's down the corridor, left at the dildo display, behind the leather harness' but she was already away, as if she knew where it was.

⁵⁴ Quotation from *All About Eve*. (Mankiewicz, 1950)

⁵⁵ Allusion to the character Eve Harrington, the obsessive fan of Margo Channing in *All About Eve*. (Mankiewicz, 1950)

HINTS OF STALKING 3 – TOOTHBRUSH (DELROY)

STEP UP TO ROSTRA

When we went to bed, I couldn't find my toothbrush. I looked all over the place but it had vanished. I even emptied out the bin, but it was definitely gone.

PARIS IS BURNING PART 2 (DELROY)

GETS 4 CANDLES NEAREST ALCOVE AND PUTS ON CORNER OF C.S. ROSTRA

A couple of years after the vogueing documentary, Dorian (the drag queen Buddhist nun) died of AIDS. In her apartment, they found a big old suitcase and inside it there was a huge parcel, completely sewn up in scraps of leather. They cut it open, a huge rush of fluid came out... and then a man's body. forensics said that Dorian had sewn him inside the leather so snugly that he had become embalmed as his own bodily fluids seeped out. They interviewed Pepper La Baija, mother of the House of La Baija and she said Dorian had been celibate for years. There was a butch married man in the seventies who said he wouldn't leave his wife unless Dorian had the operation, but Dorian refused. Nobody heard any more about him, until they found the suitcase.⁵⁶

BUGCHASERS

STAND UP ON C.S. ROSTRA

Look, I'm going to get it in the end. We all are. We're all gonna die and die like flies.⁵⁷ So, I might as well get it over with. We make so many sacrifices. What's the point of risking getting stabbed to death in the street for being gay and not even enjoying the sex. Never really letting go. Once I decided that I was gonna go out and get it, I felt in control. But I started thinking. Do I just want to get this from some random old queen in a darkroom? They're giving me back my life, giving me back the control. It's a beautiful gift.

PROUD MARY⁵⁸

MOVE TO STAGE

⁵⁶ Amazingly, this is all true. Described in Cunningham's undated article *The Slap Of Love* [online]

⁵⁷ Quotation from *Mississippi Goddam*, Simone 1964.

⁵⁸ *Proud Mary* (Turner, 1971)

REMOVE LAYER OF CLOTHING

You know, every now and then we think you might like to hear something from us nice and easy. But there's just one thing. Ike and Tina Turner never do nothing nice and easy. Do you know why? Because we like to do it nice and rough. But we're gonna take the beginning of this song and do it easy and then we're gonna do the finish rough. This is the way we do Proud Mary.

And we're rolling, rolling, rolling on the river
Listen to the story

I left a good job in the city
Working for the man every night and day
And I never lost one minute of sleeping
Worrying 'bout the way things might have been

Big wheel keep on turning
Proud mary keep on burning
And were rolling, rolling
Rolling on the river

Cleaned a lot of plates in Memphis
Pumped a lot of tane down in New Orleans
But I never saw the good side of the city
Till I hitched a ride on a riverboat queen

Big wheel keep on turning
Proud mary keep on burning
And were rolling, rolling
Rolling on the river

If you come down to the river
I bet you gonna find some people who live

You dont have to worry if you got no money

People on the river are happy to give

EXITS THROUGH DOORS AS MUSIC FADES

I N T E R V A L

SET STOOL ON CORNER ROSTRA

STRIKE CANDLES C.S.

SET WHEELCHAIR NEXT TO ROSTRA (ON STAGE SIDE)

OPENING ACT 2

ENTER WITH TOILET ROLL STUCK TO SHOE AT END OF INTERVAL AND
WANDER AROUND WITH COCKTAIL

WANDERS THROUGH TABLES

Does anybody feel like hearing the blues?⁵⁹ I'll tell you about the fucking blues
ladies and gentleman. My man gone left me. My man gone called me fat
washed up old ho. I'm living in a disused strip joint. My fans all deserted me
long ago. [HANDS COCKTAIL TO AUDIENCE MEMBER] I got no job. I got no
money. I got no bling. But do you know what I can't get out of my head? [ON
MIC] The bitch is back!

ELEANOR RIGBY a la Aretha⁶⁰

ARETHA

I'm Eleanor Rigby, I picked up the rice
In the church where the weddin's had been, yeah
I'm Eleanor Rigby, I'm keepin' my face in a jar by the door
You wanna know what is it for'

⁵⁹ Quotation from Franklin, 1968

⁶⁰ McCartney 1966, but performed in the style of Franklin, 1968.

Well, all the lonely people
Where do they all come from' yeah
All the lonely people, where do they all belong' now now

Father McKenzie writin' a words to a sermon that no one will hear
No one comes near
Look at him workin', darnin' his socks in the night
What does he care' yeah
All the lonely people, where do they all come from'
All the lonely people, where do they all belong' yea!

Uum-hum-um-um, um hum- hum- yea!
Eleanor, baby, um hum-hum-um

Eleanor Rigby, died in the church
And was buried along with her name
Nobody came
Father McKenzie wipin' the dirt from his hands
As he walked from the grave

Sayin' all the lonely people, where do, where do they come from'
All over the world, the lonely, lonely, lonely, people
Where do, where do they all belong'
Ooo lonely, only the lonely know
Ooohoo lonely, only the lonely people know

Just like a Eleanor Rigby, yeah, Eleanor, Eleanor
Rigby, only the lonely, yeah the lonely, yea-e-yea
fades-
Loneliness
Yeah gotta love some lonely people

A re re re re re re re re Aretha, just a little bit. Sister 'Re. The truth is she never really left the church! Aretha, Michigan declares your voice to be one of the state's precious natural resources.

ASPHYXIATION (DELROY)

GET THE COCKTAIL BACK AND DRAIN IT

When I was little my two older sisters used to do anything they could to upset me. Beverly used to buy frozen cod in parsley sauce and defrost it under the hot tap. Every week she would sob to my Dad because I couldn't eat it. My Dad would say [HEAVY ACCENT] 'Delroy, you are an ingrate. Your sister has bestowed a bountiful gift of food upon your plate. Our brothers and sisters at

the equator do not have the privilege of turning down a perfectly good plate of cod and parsley sauce. You should be deeply and thoroughly ashamed of yourself.' Bev would stand behind him with this face [SMUG FACE - THEN GIVE GLASS TO STAGE MANAGEMENT]

MOVE TOWARDS WHEELCHAIR (NEXT TO C.S. ROSTRA, ON STAGE SIDE)

The worst thing was when Bev would sit on my tummy while Charmaine held the cushion over my face. They'd wait and wait until I started to fit. The older I got, the longer it took. One time, when I was about thirteen, I messed my pants. They never did it again.

GINA AL DESNUDO

DELROY [LOOKING TOWARDS STAGE]: LaToya, this is Shaneequa, one of your biggest fans... LaToya what's wrong?

GINA: [JUMP INTO CHAIR] Que surprise, girlfriend! I am al desnudo, Gina al desnudo.⁶¹ [WHEEL TOWARDS STAGE] Miss Gina from Argentina - she's back. I can't think of all the muy autentico ways that I'm gonna fuck with you in the head, senora. Oh si si si . I am gina al desnudo but you are still a motherfucking pichu macha. You thought you could get rid of me. Huh? Lady friend? Sisterwoman?

TURNS WHEELCHAIR TO FACE AUDIENCE.

All these years I've been hiding, hermana-mujer. Waiting to come back and bite you on your culo. I'm from the projects, but you from the gutter. LaToya Levine the bitch from the schemes. You would never do this to me if I wasn't stuck every minute of the day in this chair de wheelos.⁶²

LIZA SINGS MARY J BLIGE (GINA)

ON MIC

⁶¹ A very oblique reference. The Spanish name for *All About Eve* is *Eva Aldesnudo*, as discussed in *All About My Mother* (Almodovar, 1989) which also draws heavy reference to the film. Also, the character Agrado was a source for Miss Gina.

⁶² Reference to *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane* (Aldrich, 1972)

The woman is a fucking diva. When I went to see Liza Minelli on tour she broke those other little bitches in half. She opened the show in an outfit that was so bling I had to hide my face, senora. She was wearing a floor length white fur coat and a gold chain that was so thick it looked like J-Lo would use it to lock up her bicycle. Her opening number was a tribute to the fierce ghetto bitches. Family Affair by Mary J Blige....⁶³

[LIZA MINELLI VOICE]

Come on everybody get on up
Cause you know we gots to get it crunk
Liz M is in the spot tonight
And I'm a make ya feel allright
Come on baby just party with me
Let loose and set your body free
I told you leave your situations at the door
So grab somebody and get your ass on the dance floor

CLAPS SELF WITH HANDS BEHIND BACK

ASPHYXIATION SEX (DELROY)

PUSH WHEELCHAIR TO DOOR SIDE OF C.S. ROSTRA

WALK TO CORNER ROSTRA, SIT ON STOOL

All she has to do is clamp her hand over my mouth and squeeze my nose a little bit. It takes about two minutes and then I cum like a juggernaut. They tell you that it's really dangerous, but I've only ever blacked out once or twice.

MISS GINA'S BACK STORY PT. 2

IN WHEELCHAIR AT DOOR SIDE OF C.S. ROSTRA

Like I said before intermission, the real problem comes when I start seeing things getting up close and personal between Miss LaToya and the manager, Joe. First, they start sharing a room on tour. Then, our mic stands aren't in a line no more. LaToya is in the middle and a little bit forward. The last straw

⁶³ *Liza's Back* concert as described by Price, 2002.

comes when we arrive at the Apollo theatre Harlem. 'For one night only – LaToya Levine and The Skylarks.'⁶⁴ Sorry, no pero. I hit the fucking roof, Senora. I find LaToya in the bar. I say LaToya 'you drunk'. You drunk and you a low-down, double-crossing bitch. [PAUSE] She punched me with a corkscrew. Punctured a hole clean through my cheek and knocked out a tooth.

The doctors said that I wouldn't be able to work for three weeks. Next day, Joe the manager comes the hospital. He says I'm real real sorry. I'm so sorry that I have to do this. LaToya was so upset that she couldn't perform last night. I can't have that kinda trouble. I'm gonna have to fire you. Mamaracha! There's nothing in my bank account after all this time. I can't even pay my hospital bill, so they kick me out. I go back to Joe and get down on my knees. And when I say on my knees, I'm not talking about no begging, guapo. You know the best I could get out of him? Tour bus driver. Then one night, there's a scream in the night and you wonder – who could that have been?⁶⁵ Well, it was me having my legs crushed against the gates of Radio City Roller Rink in Birmingham, Alabama. Nobody knows how the bus went out of control and I never believed the rumours that LaToya was behind the wheel.⁶⁶ Slow curtain, the end.

LATOYA'S VIEW OF MISS GINA pt 1

JUMPS OUT OF WHEELCHAIR

She was not fired. She chose to leave the band over a scandal. She had stolen my purple mink coat and matching muff. Cut to years later, when we're both destitute. Miss Gina from Argentina had got herself a job in a tanning salon called Tanzania. At the end of the day she locked up the salon and slept on one of the tanning beds because she was 'homeless! Homeless!'⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Allusion to *The Supremes* becoming *Diana Ross and The Supremes*. Taken from television interview with the other Supremes (now untraceable).

⁶⁵ Quotation from *Pirate Jenny*, as performed by Simone, 1964.

⁶⁶ Allusion to the narrative of *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*, (Aldrich, 1972)

⁶⁷ Quotation from Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Paul Simon, 1986.

Then she started sleeping on the beds while they were switched on.⁶⁸ She frizzed up here hair, got collagen injections for fuller lips. Rhinoplasty to widen the bridge of the nose and the piece de resistance - buttock implants to give her a booty so pert that you could stand a pint of Guinness on it. Shaneequa was born. She was working that tragic mulatto thing.⁶⁹ The beautiful, exotic woman stained by the black man's blood. Made Mariah Carey look like dog shit.⁷⁰

MIRIAM MAKEBA

WALK TO FOOT OF STAGE

REMOVE LAYER OF CLOTHES

There is so much that we could say about Miriam Makeba. I don't need to tell any of you that Makeba is... Mama Africa!! A huge singing star in South Africa at an early age, she suffered under the brutal apartheid system. She said "I do not sing politics, I sing the truth." She told the truth about what was happening in South Africa and the world was horrified. So were the South African government. They took her passport, stamped the word 'invalid' on it, and left the room.⁷¹ Even in exile, she kept raising her voice. "This is the story of Makeba. They keep hitting me on the head with a hammer... and I keep getting up."⁷²

PATA PATA , Miriam Makeba⁷³

DANCE ON FLOOR IN FRONT OF STAGE

Saguguka sathi beka

(Nantsi, pata pata)

Saguguka sathi beka

(Yiyo, pata pata)

⁶⁸ Self-reflexive reference to the Ganguro craze.

⁶⁹ Reference to Bogle, 1973.

⁷⁰ Reference to Carey's much-discussed mixed parentage. Some have argued she is the 'perfect product'. She looks white, but has the credibility of some black blood.

⁷¹ All from Makeba and Hall, 1988.

⁷² Quotation from magazine interview with Makeba, now untraceable.

⁷³ Makeba, 1967.

Yi yo mama yiyo mama

(Nantsi, pata pata)

Yi yo mama yiyo mama

(Yiyo, pata pata)

Pata pata is the name of the dance we do down Johannesburg way.

Everybody starts to move as soon as Pata Pata starts to play.

Saguguka sathi beka

(Nantsi, pata pata)

Saguguka sathi beka

(Yiyo, pata pata)

Yi yo mama yiyo mama

(Nantsi, pata pata)

Yi yo mama yiyo mama

(Yiyo, pata pata)

Every Friday and Saturday night it's Pata Pata time. The dance keeps going all night long, until the morning sun begins to shine.

Saguguka sathi beka

(Nantsi, pata pata)

Saguguka sathi beka

(Yiyo, pata pata)

Yi yo mama yiyo mama

(Nantsi, pata pata)

Yi yo mama yiyo mama

(Yiyo, pata pata)

DANCE TOWARDS C.S. ROSTRA AT END OF SONG

DELROY'S THEORY ON ELECTRONIC MUSIC

LAY DIAGONALLY ON C.S. ROSTRA

There's a straight line of development from military music that was sung by black slaves. That developed into spirituals, gospel music and the blues, which later became R&B and soul. In 1977 Donna Summer released *I Feel Love*.⁷⁴ That was the first song to have a completely electronic backing. Stockhausen – my hero – invented electronic music and was a big influence on Kraftwerk. That gave birth in America to electronic dance music and techno and to hip-hop and house. 1977 was the year that I was born.

LATOYA'S VIEW OF MISS GINA pt 2

MOVE TOWARDS WHEELCHAIR AT DOOR SIDE OF C.S. ROSTRA

And that's when Shaneequa started stealing my old moves, my old material. She had an underground hit singing my old number *Help Me Make It Through The Night*.⁷⁵ Then, the final insult. She was awarded the most coveted Mahalia Jackson⁷⁶ award for Outstanding Achievement in S.O.U.L.⁷⁷ But, an anonymous letter was sent containing copies of Miss Gina's birth certificate, passport, gas bill, medical records and strips of skin from her original nose. [smiling] The award was rescinded immediately and Shaneequa returned to the shade from whence she came. (LOWERS INTO WHEELCHAIR) Three words for you, sister – Des-ti-tute.

MISS GINA MOVES IN WITH LATOYA

SIT IN WHEELCHAIR AT DOOR SIDE OF C.S. ROSTRA

That bitch owes me. I moved in to her place, just turned up one day with a suitcase and that was that. I been watching a lot of Oprah Winfrey and she says we all internalising a whole lot of pain. We need to release the negative energy to achieve closure. So now, LaToya she my girl [THUMPS CHEST] and I'll do anything to give her help, support and love.

⁷⁴ Summer, 1971.

⁷⁵ Reference to Shaneequa in *Through The Night*.

⁷⁶ The legendary Mahalia Jackson, mother of modern gospel, as well as singing teacher and mentor to the young Aretha Franklin (who later sang at her funeral).

⁷⁷ Allusion to the narrative of *All About Eve*, where Eve steals Margo's style and goes on to win the highly coveted Sarah Bernhardt award. (Mankiewicz, 1950)

LATOYA'S DILEMMA (DELROY)

JUMP OUT OF CHAIR IN SHOCK, GO TOWARDS STAGE

There was a knock at the door. It was the bailiffs. Apparently LaToya has got loads of old gambling debts. Afterwards, she slipped into this absolute blue funk, telling me she was washed up, boo hoo hoo. Then just as suddenly, she's planning the big comeback. She said she would record a live album – *LaToya Levine Uncorked*. Then came the kicker. Puff Daddy would produce this album.⁷⁸

LATOYA'S NERVES

ON STAGE, ON MIC

But I'm nervous. What if I look fat in the costumes? What if people laugh? What if I sing out of tune? What if... the psychic soul hotline is engaged?

MISS GINA HELPS WITH THE ACT

RUN TO WHEELCHAIR (DOOR SIDE OF CENTRE ROSTRA)

WHEEL AROUND CENTRE ROSTRA

It is like the old days, Miss Thing. Now that we are best girlfriends again I am gonna help you lick this motherfucking show into shape. Senora, you gonna be hot [sizzle tongue on arse] Ca-li-en-te! I have the perfect idea to get Puff Daddy's attention. He is very flattered when other artists choose to sample his work. So, I think you need to use a sample from him. He will hear that you are a big fan, great minds think alike, and then your phone starts ringing, girl! Also, how about using a snake? No, difficult on the tour bus. Ping pong balls? I know, I know, you don't got the same muscles down there at your age.

LATOYA AND DELROY SPLIT UP (DELROY)

Fuck you, LaToya. I do not need this. I do not need you. You need me, because you are a washed-up fat old cunt who can't get arrested. And you've got the gall, the unmitigated gall to say that you're sick of me being late for rehearsals. You are not Diana Ross, you're Jabba the fucking Hutt. I can't sit

⁷⁸ Allusion to narrative of *Sunset Boulevard*, where Norma plans a remake of *Salome*, which will be directed by Cecil B DeMille. (*Wilder, 1950*)

up all night working on tracks for your precious bloody show. I've got a job to do. Yeah, bo-ring. It pays for your boring food and boring electricity and boring fucking petrol to these boring fucking shithole gigs. I'm going. I'll come back in the morning and pick up the rest of my stuff. I have had it. Fuck you.

DELROY'S DANCEHALL BEATING

BAR STOOL ON CORNER ROSTRA

LaToya had got tickets for a Buju Banton gig. He's the one who did all those lyrics about shooting gay men and pour acid over dem. She had said it was just fun, I was over-reacting. I pointed out that it's illegal to incite murder. The same night I was walking home from a club. There were about six of them. Batty bwoy. I've been followed before, but this time I really wasn't in the mood and I said 'just fuck off.'

It didn't even hurt that much... at first. It felt cold, because there was quite a lot of blood. I just looked. I just stood and looked down at myself. Then they dragged me onto the ground and started kicking. One of them was stamping on my ankles. I remember there was a Budweiser bottle, the label was still hanging off the broken end, all ragged. Two of them got me up, held my arms behind me while he went to work on my face. This big sweeping action, [HE DEMONSTRATES] like semaphore.

The police arrived and arrested the lot of us. The first thing that I remember clearly was when the police came in to the cell. It was a black officer telling me the others had explained that I was coming on to one them, feeling up his arse at the bus stop and they just lost it. He said, it's understandable really. I didn't think about it, I just fell towards him and pushed his face. By the time he was finished I had to have ten of my stitches redone. I didn't find out about the broken ribs until later.

WALK THROUGH TABLES SLOWLY TO STAGE

I phoned and Reg answered the phone straight away. I told her what had happened. I asked her to come and get me. There was a pause... and then she laughed. [RUN TO STAGE DEEP MALE LAUGH, THEN HIGH FEMALE

LAUGH, LATOYA VOICE] Really laughed... and then I said to her there is only one singer I do not welcome on the psychic soul hotline. Miss Billie Holiday, for she sings like a wasp, like a little motorbike. But, I am a slave to the whim of the spirits [CONVULSING,].... Step into the light... [VESPA REVVING NOISE]

I LOVE YOU PORGY ⁷⁹

Up town top ranking [excerpt] - a cappella -

I love you, Porgy
Don't let him take me
Don't let him handle me
With his fat hands

GINA'S DISABLED RUN-IN

[RUN TO CHAIR AND STAND]

You know, I was in Brixton market and the disabled access is really terrible. So, I just got out and walk around a little but because, I don't really need the chair. I just use it to make LaToya feel guilty. This rude bitch says you is mocking disabled people. I said, fuck you lady, got back in and wheeled away.

[WHEEL TO DOORS]

[UNDER BREATH] Up town top ranking. See me in me 'alter back. See me gi' ye 'eart attack. ⁸⁰

DELROY'S CONVALESCENCE

REMOVE LAYER OF CLOTHING.

My man done needed me, lazy gemma. I said to him I am the Mammy now. I am yo big, bossy Mammy come to take care of you. He didn't laugh, but that's because he was in so much pain. What a horrible incident, lazy gemma.

Delroy will need round the clock care and I can't selfishly let my career stand in the way of love. I dedicated myself to that new life as a big mammy for my

⁷⁹ Gershwin, as performed by Holliday, 1948

⁸⁰ Quotation from Althea and Donna's reggae hit *Uptown Top Ranking*, 1977.

poor sick coon.⁸¹ [KNEEL NEXT TO C.S. ROSTRA] My career gone, but my man still here – hanging on to life by a tiny thread. [LAY DOWN ON C.S. ROSTRA] But a golden thread provided from the spiritual sewing basket of one LaToya Levine, the toast of Queens.

QUIET NIGHTS IN (DELROY)

ROLL OVER AND LAY ON BACK.

It's funny to think that we might easily never have met. I don't do clubs that often. I find all those pissy queens a bit hard to handle. I much prefer a night in with a video. LaToya loves the clubs, she's out practically every night of the week, but I can always convince her to stay in if I've got a DVD of *Sunset Boulevard* or *All About Eve* or *Whatever happened to Baby Jane*.

MAGIC MIRIAM

[RISE TO STANDING] The walls melted away as a neon orange London cab sailed into view.⁸² The door was opened by a big old mouse in a clown costume and out came... Miriam Makeba herself. [MAKEBA VOICE] 'LaToya you have sung Pata Pata and conjured up my spirit. I'm not actually dead yet, but I am very, very old. [PATA PATA DANCE IN CIRCLE] I am your fairy godmama. Your career is not over. I have arranged a big show at the Ritz club in New York City to prove what a huge talent you are.⁸³ Come, get into the cab. We shall fly to New York City in the blink of an eye!

LATOYA IS INCANDESCENT

TOWARDS STAGE

Fucking great, you think this is fucking funny. [PROWL TOWARDS STAGE] Don't think that I don't know what's going on. I thought I was paranoid. I thought that that the old illness was getting the better of me but I was right. The two of you were conspiring to bring about my downfall. [UP ON STAGE]

⁸¹ 'Mammy' and 'Coon' both references to Bogle, 1973.

⁸² Cab, mouse and clown costume all refer to *Through The Night*.

⁸³ Allusion to the life of Tina Turner. Her showcase at The Ritz was the turning point of her solo career and was used as the climax to the biopic *Tina, What's Love Got To do With It?* (Gibson, 1993)

Me, Latoya Levine, whom no man shall ever possess.⁸⁴ I'm every woman it's all in me. Anything you want done baby, I'll do it naturally.⁸⁵ You've been sticking it in Miss Gina's disease-ridden cooze since day one. That skanky whore has never been nothing but trouble. I was a threat to you, so you worked with that scheming, ugly little cunt to humiliate me in front of Puff Daddy. [ON STAGE, ON MIC] I loved you. I lowered myself to your level but you betrayed me. You're not much of a bargain, you know. You're conceited and thoughtless and messy.⁸⁶ Me, a fifth-rate vaudevillian? I closed the first half for eleven years and you know it.⁸⁷ Porgy, nobody sticks it in your black mammy hole like I do. You get back to picking cotton you little jigabooo cunt. Nobody else knows how to fuck your old, tired, asshole the way like it, Nigger. Nobody walks out on a star, cumsucker, that's what makes one a star.⁸⁸

THE BIG SHOW (GINA)

ON STAGE, ADDRESSING THE MIC STAND AS IF IT IS LATOYA.

Miss LaToya I know you is muy nervous, but Puff Daddy is in the house. Sisterwoman, you go out and shake that bootay until P Diddy is begging for mercay. I went out front and took my seat. Everybody was there. David Bowie was there. Mick Jagger was there. Liza Minelli was there.⁸⁹ The show started with a real bang and Miss LaToya was tearing up that stage. [WALK TO C.S. ROSTRA] We get to the third song, where we put in the sample of Puff Daddy himsailf. He stands up, stock still and then he points at LaToya. 'You steal from me, white woman. You a thief.' And then he is gone. All eyes are on LaToya... and the patch. It's getting bigger. It's getting darker. Soaking into her tights and running down into her white boots. Then it really breaks out and it's splattering on the floor of the stage. There ain't nothing she can do to stop it. It's too late. It's all too late.

AUTOGRAPH FIENDS (LATOYA)

⁸⁴ Quotation from Gore Vidal's *Myra Breckinridge*, 1968

⁸⁵ *I'm Every Woman* (Khan, 1978)

⁸⁶ Quotation from *All About Eve*, (Mankiewicz, 1950)

⁸⁷ Another quotation from *All About Eve*, (Mankiewicz, 1950)

⁸⁸ Quotation from *Sunset Boulevard*, (Wilder, 1950). *Cumsucker* is not in the original.

⁸⁹ Another reference to Tina Turner's show at The Ritz. It was Bowie that invited record company executives to the show.

C.S. ROSTRA

REMOVE LAYER OF CLOTHING.

SLIDE BETWEEN LATOYA AND MISS GINA VOICES

Autograph fiends. They're not people. Those little beasts that run around in packs like coyotes. They're nobody's fans. They're juvenile delinquents. They're mental defectives. They're nobody's audience. They never see a play or a movie even. They're never indoors long enough.⁹⁰

But then my dear baby pointed out to me that I had in fact met him when he first asked me for an autograph. It had completely slipped my mind. Honestly, ladies and gentlemen. I can be so scatter-brained.

DENOUEMENT

DELROY: I'm not understanding you. I don't know who's speaking. I don't know when it's LaToya and when it's Miss Gina. Please. Reg, you're not listening to me. Reg, Cauliflower! CAULIFLOWER!

LATOYA: My poor baby: There was nothing I could do to save him. Dazed and delirious, he has a fever!⁹¹ I is yo woman, Delroy. I don't need this kind of negative energy in my life right now. [GO TO STAGE] My aura is energised, my chakras are vibrating like fuck, and I'm up, up, up. Delroy, baby, you are draining me of my psychic energy. The reception on the psychic soul hotline has never been clearer and Puff Daddy is producing my album!!! [ON MIC] You're hallucinating. I am not called Reg. I am not a divorced painter-decorator from Streatham.

DELROY [ON MIC] : Cauliflower! The real LaToya Levine went missing in the late seventies. You were her roadie. It was you that drove her away in that purple Luton van.

LATOYA [ON MIC]: I can't go on with the scene, I'm too happy. Puffy, do you mind if I say a few words? Thank you. I just want to tell you all how happy I

⁹⁰ Quotation from Margo Channing in *All About Eve*. (Mankiewicz, 1950)

⁹¹ In the style of Peggy Lee.

am to be back in the studio making an album again. You don't know how much I've missed all of you. And I promise you I'll never desert you again because after Salome we'll make another picture! And another picture! You see, this is my life. It always will be. There's nothing else, just us and the camera and those wonderful people out there in the dark. [REMOVE WIG] Alright, Puff Daddy, I'm ready for my cumshot.⁹²

GINA – [APPLYING MUD MASK, WALK TO C.S. ROSTRA] It was a mess. [WALK TO WHEELCHAIR, IN FRONT OF DOOR] A hammer, lots of blood. There was a beautiful pattern all over Delroy's face. I guess it must have been the hammer. The top of his head was open and there was stuff that looked like jello sprayed around the hole in the head. I think a pussycat had been in there and had a root around before I got home. She was looking very pleased with herself. I thought, who's the scatter-brain now? [WHEEL TOWARD C.S. ROSTRA] Miss Thing? Can you hear me? [JAGGED BREATHING – STAND AND SMILE] my wheels had left a beautiful red pattern on the floor. [WALK TO STAGE] You know, my skin is an absolute nightmare. I need this mudpack like never before. I think it's important, ladies and gentleman, that we take care of ourselves, that we don't let ourselves go. [LOOKS AT DOUBLE DOORS] Nina?! What are we going to do?

PIRATE JENNY⁹³

You people can watch while I'm scrubbing these floors
And I'm scrubbin' the floors while you're gawking
Maybe once ya tip me and it makes ya feel swell
In this crummy Southern town
In this crummy old hotel
But you'll never guess to who you're talkin'.
No. You couldn't ever guess to who you're talkin'.

⁹² Whole paragraph is a direct quote from Norma Desmond's final speech in *Sunset Boulevard* (Wildier, 1950). 'De Mille' is changed to 'Puff Daddy', 'film' changed to 'album' and 'close up' changed to 'cumshot.'

⁹³ Pirate Jenny (Simone, 1964).

Then one night there's a scream in the night
And you'll wonder who could that have been
And you see me kinda grinnin' while I'm scrubbin'
And you say, "What's she got to grin?"
I'll tell you.

There's a ship
The Black Freighter
with a skull on its masthead
will be coming in

You gentlemen can say, "Hey gal, finish them floors!
Get upstairs! What's wrong with you! Earn your keep here!
You toss me your tips
and look out to the ships
But I'm counting your heads
as I'm making the beds
Cuz there's nobody gonna sleep here, honey
Nobody
Nobody!

Then one night there's a scream in the night
And you say, "Who's that kicking up a row?"
And ya see me kinda starin' out the winda
And you say, "What's she got to stare at now?"
I'll tell ya.

There's a ship
The Black Freighter
turns around in the harbor
shootin' guns from her bow

Now
You gentlemen can wipe off that smile off your face

Cause every building in town is a flat one
This whole frickin' place will be down to the ground
Only this cheap hotel standing up safe and sound
And you yell, "Why do they spare that one?"

Yes.

That's what you say.

"Why do they spare that one?"

All the night through, through the noise and to-do
You wonder who is that person that lives up there?
And you see me stepping out in the morning
Looking nice with a ribbon in my hair

And the ship
The Black Freighter
runs a flag up its masthead
and a cheer rings the air

By noontime the dock
is a-swarmin' with men
comin' out from the ghostly freighter
They move in the shadows
where no one can see
And they're chainin' up people
and they're bringin' em to me
askin' me,
"Kill them NOW, or LATER?"
Askin' ME!
"Kill them now, or later?"

Noon by the clock
and so still by the dock
You can hear a foghorn miles away
And in that quiet of death

I'll say, "Right now.

Right now!"

Then they'll pile up the bodies

And I'll say,

"That'll learn ya!"

And the ship

The Black Freighter

disappears out to sea

And.. on... it...is... me

DISTORTED FEEDBACK OVER SOUNDSYSTEM, FOLLOWED BY SOUND
OF MIC JACK NEING PULLED OUT.

B.O.

END